Class No. 4099 Book No. B4

Library of the

Meadville Theological School

Accession No. 29120

Gift of

Rev. George A. Thayer

Lrom George A. Thayer

1st Cong. Unitarian
Church of Cincinnati
Jan 1913

BY

ARTHUR C. BENSON

FELLOW OF MAGDALENE COLLEGE
CAMBRIDGE

THE UPTON LETTERS

FROM A COLLEGE WINDOW

BESIDE STILL WATERS

THE ALTAR FIRE

THE SCHOOLMASTER

AT LARGE

THE GATE OF DEATH

THE SILENT ISLE

JOHN RUSKIN

LEAVES OF THE TREE

CHILD OF THE DAWN

PAUL THE MINSTREL

THE CHILD OF THE DAWN

By

ARTHUR CHRISTOPHER BENSON

Fellow of Magdalene College, Cambridge

ἡδό τι θαρσαλέαις
τὸν μακρὸν τείνειν βίον ἐλπίσιν

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK AND LONDON
The Knickerbocker Press
1912

COPYRIGHT, 1912
BY
ARTHUR CHRISTOPHER BENSON

The Knickerbocker Press, New York

To

MY BEST AND DEAREST FRIEND

HERBERT FRANCIS WILLIAM TATHAM

IN LOVE AND HOPE

INTRODUCTION

I THINK that a book like the following, which deals with a subject so great and so mysterious as our hope of immortality, by means of an allegory or fantasy, needs a few words of preface, in order to clear away at the outset any misunderstandings which may possibly arise in a reader's mind. Nothing is further from my wish than to attempt any philosophical or ontological exposition of what is hidden behind the veil of death. But one may be permitted to deal with the subject imaginatively or poetically, to translate hopes into visions, as I have tried to do.

The fact that underlies the book is this: that in the course of a very sad and strange experience—an illness which lasted for some two years, involving me in a dark cloud of dejection—I came to believe practically, instead of merely theoretically, in the personal

immortality of the human soul. I was conscious, during the whole time, that though the physical machinery of the nerves was out of gear, the soul and the mind remained, not only intact, but practically unaffected by the disease, imprisoned, like a bird in a cage, but perfectly free in themselves, and uninjured by the bodily weakness which enveloped them. This was not all. I was led to perceive that I had been living life with an entirely distorted standard of values; I had been ambitious, covetous, eager for comfort and respect, absorbed in trivial dreams and childish fancies. I saw, in the course of my illness, that what really mattered to the soul was the relation in which it stood to other souls; that affection was the native air of the spirit; and that anything which distracted the heart from the duty of love was a kind of bodily delusion, and simply hindered the spirit in its pilgrimage.

It is easy to learn this, to attain to a sense of certainty about it, and yet to be

unable to put it into practice as simply and frankly as one desires to do! The body grows strong again and reasserts itself; but the blessed consciousness of a great possibility apprehended and grasped remains.

There came to me, too, a sense that one of the saddest effects of what is practically a widespread disbelief in immortality, which affects many people who would nominally disclaim it, is that we think of the soul after death as a thing so altered as to be practically unrecognisable—as a meek and pious emanation, without qualities or aims or passions or traits—as a sort of amiable and weak-kneed sacristan in the temple of God; and this is the unhappy result of our so often making religion a pursuit apart from life—an occupation, not an atmosphere; so that it seems impious to think of the departed spirit as interested in anything but a vague species of liturgical exercise.

I read the other day the account of the death-bed of a great statesman, which was

written from what I may call a somewhat clerical point of view. It was recorded with much gusto that the dying politician took no interest in his schemes of government and cares of State, but found perpetual solace in the repetition of childish hymns. This fact had, or might have had, a certain beauty of its own, if it had been expressly stated that it was a proof that the tired and broken mind fell back upon old, simple, and dear recollections of bygone love. But there was manifest in the record a kind of sanctimonious triumph in the extinction of all the great man's insight and wisdom. It seemed to me that the right treatment of the episode was rather to insist that those great qualities, won by brave experience and unselfish effort, were only temporarily obscured, and belonged actually and essentially to the spirit of the man; and that if heaven is indeed, as we may thankfully believe, a place of work and progress, those qualities would be actively and energetically em-

ployed as soon as the soul was freed from the trammels of the failing body.

Another point may also be mentioned. The idea of transmigration and reincarnation is here used as a possible solution for the extreme difficulties which beset the question of the apparently fortuitous brevity of some human lives. I do not, of course, propound it as literally and precisely as it is here set down—it is not a forecast of the future, so much as a symbolising of the forces of life—but *the renewal of conscious experience,* in some form or other, seems to be the only way out of the difficulty, and it is that which is here indicated. If life is a probation for those who have to face experience and temptation, how can it be a probation for infants and children, who die before the faculty of moral choice is developed? Again, I find it very hard to believe in any multiplication of human souls. It is even more difficult for me to believe in the creation of new souls than in the creation of new matter. Sci-

ence has shown us that there is no actual addition made to the sum of matter, and that the apparent creation of new forms of plants or animals is nothing more than a rearrangement of existing particles—that if a new form appears in one place, it merely means that so much matter is transferred thither from another place. I find it, I say, hard to believe that the sum total of life is actually increased. To put it very simply for the sake of clearness, and accepting the assumption that human life had some time a beginning on this planet, it seems impossible to think that when, let us say, the two first progenitors of the race died, there were but two souls in heaven; that when the next generation died there were, let us say, ten souls in heaven; and that this number has been added to by thousands and millions, until the unseen world is peopled, as it must be now, if no reincarnation is possible, by myriads of human identities, who, after a single brief taste of incarnate life, join some vast community of spirits in

which they eternally reside. I do not say that this latter belief may not be true; I only say that in default of evidence, it seems to me a difficult faith to hold; while a reincarnation of spirits, if one could believe it, would seem to me both to equalise the inequalities of human experience, and give one a lively belief in the virtue and worth of human endeavour. But all this is set down, as I say, in a tentative and not in a philosophical form.

And I have also in these pages kept advisedly clear of Christian doctrines and beliefs; not because I do not believe wholeheartedly in the divine origin and unexhausted vitality of the Christian revelation, but because I do not intend to lay rash and profane hands upon the highest and holiest of mysteries.

I will add one word about the genesis of the book. Some time ago I wrote a number of short tales of an allegorical type. It was a curious experience. I seemed to have come upon them in my mind, as one comes

upon a covey of birds in a field. One by one they took wings and flew; and when I had finished, though I was anxious to write more tales, I could not discover any more, though I beat the covert patiently to dislodge them.

This particular tale rose unbidden in my mind. I was never conscious of creating any of its incidents. It seemed to be all there from the beginning; and I felt throughout like a man making his way along a road, and describing what he sees as he goes. The road stretched ahead of me; I could not see beyond the next turn at any moment; it just unrolled itself inevitably and, I will add, very swiftly to my view, and was thus a strange and momentous experience.

I will only add that the book is all based upon an intense belief in God, and a no less intense conviction of personal immortality and personal responsibility. It aims at bringing out the fact that our life is a very real pilgrimage to high and far-off

things from mean and sordid beginnings, and that the key of the mystery lies in the frank facing of experience, as a blessed process by which the secret purpose of God is made known to us; and, even more, in a passionate belief in Love, the love of friend and neighbour, and the love of God; and in the absolute faith that we are all of us, from the lowest and most degraded human soul to the loftiest and wisest, knit together with chains of infinite nearness and dearness, under God, and in Him, and through Him, now and hereafter and for evermore.

A. C. B.

The Old Lodge, Magdalene College,
Cambridge, *January*, 1912.

The Child of the Dawn

I

CERTAINLY the last few moments of my former material, worn-out life, as I must still call it, were made horrible enough for me. I came to, after the operation, in a deadly sickness and ghastly confusion of thought. I was just dimly conscious of the trim, bare room, the white bed, a figure or two, but everything else was swallowed up in the pain, which filled all my senses at once. Yet surely, I thought, it is all something outside me? . . . my brain began to wander, and the pain became a thing. It was a tower of stone, high and blank, with a little sinister window high up, from which something was every now and then waved above the house-roofs. . . . The tower was

gone in a moment, and there was a heap piled up on the floor of a great room with open beams—a granary, perhaps. The heap was of curved sharp steel things like sickles: something moved and muttered underneath it, and blood ran out on the floor. Then I was instantly myself, and the pain was with me again; and then there fell on me a sense of faintness, so that the cold sweat-drops ran suddenly out on my brow. There came a smell of drugs, sharp and pungent, on the air. I heard a door open softly, and a voice said, "He is sinking fast—they must be sent for at once." Then there were more people in the room, people whom I thought I had known once, long ago; but I was buried and crushed under the pain, like the thing beneath the heap of sickles. There swept over me a dreadful fear; and I could see that the fear was reflected in the faces above me; but now they were strangely distorted and elongated, so that I could have laughed, if only I had had the time; but I had to move the weight off me, which

was crushing me. Then a roaring sound began to come and go upon the air, louder and louder, faster and faster; the strange pungent scent came again; and then I was thrust down under the weight, monstrous, insupportable; further and further down; and there came a sharp bright streak, like a blade severing the strands of a rope drawn taut and tense; another and another; one was left, and the blade drew near. . . .

I fell suddenly out of the sound and scent and pain into the most incredible and blessed peace and silence. It would have been like a sleep, but I was still perfectly conscious, with a sense of unutterable and blissful fatigue; a picture passed before me, of a calm sea, of vast depth and clearness. There were cliffs at a little distance, great headlands and rocky spires. I seemed to myself to have left them, to have come down through them, to have embarked. There was a pale light everywhere, flushed with rose-colour, like the light of a summer

dawn; and I felt as I had once felt as a child, awakened early in the little old house among the orchards, on a spring morning; I had risen from my bed, and leaning out of my window, filled with a delightful wonder, I had seen the cool morning quicken into light among the dewy apple-blossoms. That was what I felt like, as I lay upon the moving tide, glad to rest, not wondering or hoping, not fearing or expecting anything—just there, and at peace.

There seemed to be no time in that other blessed morning, no need to do anything. The cliffs, I did not know how, faded from me, and the boundless sea was about me on every side; but I cannot describe the timelessness of it. There are no human words for it all, yet I must speak of it in terms of time and space, because both time and space were there, though I was not bound by them.

And here first I will say a few words about the manner of speech I shall use. It is very hard to make clear, but I think I

can explain it in an image. I once walked alone, on a perfect summer day, on the South Downs. The great smooth shoulders of the hills lay left and right, and, in front of me, the rich tufted grass ran suddenly down to the plain, which stretched out before me like a map. I saw the fields and woods, the minute tiled hamlet-roofs, the white roads, on which crawled tiny carts. A shepherd, far below, drove his flock along a little deep-cut lane among high hedges. The sounds of earth came faintly and sweetly up, obscure sounds of which I could not tell the origin; but the tinkling of sheep-bells was the clearest, and the barking of the shepherd-dog. My own dog sat beside me, watching my face, impatient to be gone. But at the barking he pricked up his ears, put his head on one side, and wondered, I saw, where that companionable sound came from. What he made of the scene I do not know; the sight of the fruitful earth, the homes of men, the fields and waters, filled me with an inexpressible emotion, a wide-

flung hope, a sense of the immensity and intricacy of life. But to my dog it meant nothing at all, though he saw just what I did. To him it was nothing but a great excavation in the earth, patched and streaked with green. It was not then the scene itself that I loved; that was only a symbol of emotions and ideas within me. It touched the spring of a host of beautiful thoughts; but the beauty and the sweetness were the contribution of my own heart and mind.

Now in the new world in which I found myself, I approached the thoughts of beauty and loveliness direct, without any intervening symbols at all. The emotions which beautiful things had aroused in me upon earth were all there, in the new life, but not confused or blurred, as they had been in the old life, by the intruding symbols of ugly, painful, evil things. That was all gone like a mist. I could not think an evil or an ugly thought.

For a period it was so with me. For a

long time—I will use the words of earth henceforth without any explanation—I abode in the same calm, untroubled peace, partly in memory of the old days, partly in the new visions. My senses seemed all blended in one sense; it was not sight or hearing or touch—it was but an instant apprehension of the essence of things. All that time I was absolutely alone, though I had a sense of being watched and tended in a sort of helpless and happy infancy. It was always the quiet sea, and the dawning light. I lived over the scenes of the old life in a vague, blissful memory. For the joy of the new life was that all that had befallen me had a strange and perfect significance. I had lived like other men. I had rejoiced, toiled, schemed, suffered, sinned. But it was all one now. I saw that each influence had somehow been shaping and moulding me. The evil I had done, was it indeed evil? It had been the flowering of a root of bitterness, the impact of material forces and influences. Had I ever

desired it? Not in my spirit, I now felt. Sin had brought me shame and sorrow, and they had done their work. Repentance, contrition—ugly words! I laughed softly at the thought of how different it all was from what I had dreamed. I was as the lost sheep found, as the wayward son taken home; and should I spoil my joy with recalling what was past and done with for ever? Forgiveness was not a process, then, a thing to be sued for and to be withheld; it was all involved in the glad return to the breast of God.

What was the mystery, then? The things that I had wrought, ignoble, cruel, base, mean, selfish—had I ever willed to do them? It seemed impossible, incredible. Were those grievous things still growing, seeding, flowering in other lives left behind? Had they invaded, corrupted, hurt other poor wills and lives? I could think of them no longer, any more than I could think of the wrongs done to myself. Those had not hurt me either. Perhaps I had

still to suffer, but I could not think of that. I was too much overwhelmed with joy. The whole thing seemed so infinitely little and far away. So for a time I floated on the moving crystal of the translucent sea, over the glimmering deeps, the dawn above me, the scenes of the old life growing and shaping themselves and fading without any will of my own, nothing within or without me but ineffable peace and perfect joy.

II

I KNEW quite well what had happened to me; that I had passed through what mortals call Death: and two thoughts came to me; one was this. There had been times on earth when one had felt sure with a sort of deep instinct that one could not really ever die; yet there had been hours of weariness and despair when one had wondered whether death would not mean a silent blankness. That thought had troubled me most, when I had followed to the grave some friend or some beloved. The mouldering form, shut into the narrow box, was thrust with a sense of shame and disgrace into the clay, and no word or sign returned to show that the spirit lived on, or that one would ever find that dear proximity again. How foolish it seemed now ever to

have doubted, ever to have been troubled! Of course it was all eternal and everlasting. And then, too, came a second thought. One had learned in life, alas, so often to separate what was holy and sacred from daily life; there were prayers, liturgies, religious exercises, solemnities, Sabbaths—an oppressive strain, too often, and a banishing of active life. Brought up as one had been, there had been a mournful overshadowing of thought, that after death, and with God, it would be all grave and constrained and serious, a perpetual liturgy, an unending Sabbath. But now all was deliciously merged together. All of beautiful and gracious that there had been in religion, all of joyful and animated and eager that there had been in secular life, everything that amused, interested, excited, all fine pictures, great poems, lovely scenes, intrepid thoughts, exercise, work, jests, laughter, perceptions, fancies—they were all one now; only sorrow and weariness and dulness and ugliness and greediness were gone.

The thought was fresh, pure, delicate, full of a great and mirthful content.

There were no divisions of time in my great peace; past, present, and future were alike all merged. How can I explain that? It seems so impossible, having once seen it, that it should be otherwise. The day did not broaden to the noon, nor fade to evening. There was no night there. More than that. In the other life, the dark low-hung days, one seemed to have lived so little, and always to have been making arrangements to live; so much time spent in plans and schemes, in alterations and regrets. There was this to be done and that to be completed; one thing to be begun, another to be cleared away; always in search of the peace which one never found; and if one did achieve it, then it was surrounded, like some cast carrion, by a cloud of poisonous thoughts, like buzzing blue-flies. Now at last one lived indeed; but there grew up in the soul, very gradually and sweetly, the sense that one was resting,

growing accustomed to something, learning the ways of the new place. I became more and more aware that I was not alone; it was not that I met, or encountered, or was definitely conscious of any thought that was not my own; but there were motions as of great winds in the untroubled calm in which I lay, of vast deeps drawing past me. There were hoverings and poisings of unseen creatures, which gave me neither awe nor surprise, because they were not in the range of my thought as yet; but it was enough to show me that I was not alone, that there was life about me, purposes going forward, high activities.

The first time I experienced anything more definite was when suddenly I became aware of a great crystalline globe that rose like a bubble out of the sea. It was of an incredible vastness; but I was conscious that I did not perceive it as I had perceived things upon the earth, but that I apprehended it all together, within and without. It rose softly and swiftly out of

the expanse. The surface of it was all alive. It had seas and continents, hills and valleys, woods and fields, like our own earth. There were cities and houses thronged with living beings; it was a world like our own, and yet there was hardly a form upon it that resembled any earthly form, though all were articulate and definite, ranging from growths which I knew to be vegetable, with a dumb and sightless life of their own, up to beings of intelligence and purpose. It was a world, in fact, on which a history like that of our own world was working itself out; but the whole was of a crystalline texture, if texture it can be called; there was no colour or solidity, nothing but form and silence, and I realised that I saw, if not materially yet in thought, and recognised then, that all the qualities of matter, the sounds, the colours, the scents—all that depends upon material vibration—were abstracted from it; while form, of which the idea exists in the mind apart from all concrete manifestations, was still present. For

some time after that, a series of these crystalline globes passed through the atmosphere where I dwelt, some near, some far; and I saw in an instant, in each case, the life and history of each. Some were still all aflame, mere currents of molten heat and flying vapour. Some had the first signs of rudimentary life—some, again, had a full and organised life, such as ours on earth, with a clash of nations, a stream of commerce, a perfecting of knowledge. Others were growing cold, and the life upon them was artificial and strange, only achieved by a highly intellectual and noble race, with an extraordinary command of natural forces, fighting in wonderfully constructed and guarded dwellings against the growing deathliness of a frozen world, and with a tortured despair in their minds at the extinction which threatened them. There were others, again, which were frozen and dead, where the drifting snow piled itself up over the gigantic and pathetic contrivances of a race living underground, with

huge vents and chimneys, burrowing further into the earth in search of shelter, and nurturing life by amazing processes which I cannot here describe. They were marvellously wise, those pale and shadowy creatures, with a vitality infinitely ahead of our own, a vitality out of which all weakly or diseased elements had long been eliminated. And again there were globes upon which all seemed dead and frozen to the core, slipping onwards in some infinite progress. But though I saw life under a myriad of new conditions, and with an endless variety of forms, the nature of it was the same as ours. There was the same ignorance of the future, the same doubts and uncertainties, the same pathetic leaning of heart to heart, the same wistful desire after permanence and happiness, which could not be there or so attained.

Then, too, I saw wild eddies of matter taking shape, of a subtlety that is as far beyond any known earthly conditions of matter as steam is above frozen stone.

Great tornadoes whirled and poised; globes of spinning fire flew off on distant errands of their own, as when the heavens were made; and I saw, too, the crash of world with world, when satellites that had lost their impetus drooped inwards upon some central sun, and merged themselves at last with a titanic leap. All this enacted itself before me, while life itself flew like a pulse from system to system, never diminished, never increased, withdrawn from one to settle on another. All this I saw and knew.

III

I THOUGHT I could never be satiated by this infinite procession of wonders. But at last there rose in my mind, like a rising star, the need to be alone no longer. I was passing through a kind of heavenly infancy; and just as a day comes when a child puts out a hand with a conscious intention, not merely a blind groping, but with a need to clasp and caress, or answers a smile by a smile, a word by a purposeful cry, so in a moment I was aware of some one with me and near me, with a heart and a nature that leaned to mine and had need of me, as I of him. I knew him to be one who had lived as I had lived, on the earth that was ours,—lived many lives, indeed; and it was then first that I became aware that I had myself lived many lives too. My human life, which I had last left, was the

fullest and clearest of all my existences; but they had been many and various, though always progressive. I must not now tell of the strange life histories that had enfolded me—they had risen in dignity and worth from a life far back, unimaginably elementary and instinctive; but I felt in a moment that my new friend's life had been far richer and more perfect than my own, though I saw that there were still experiences ahead of both of us; but not yet. I may describe his presence in human similitudes, a presence perfectly defined, though apprehended with no human sight. He bore a name which described something clear, strong, full of force, and yet gentle of access, like water. It was just that; a thing perfectly pure and pervading, which could be stained and troubled, and yet could retain no defilement or agitation; which a child could scatter and divide, and yet was absolutely powerful and insuperable. I will call him Amroth. Him, I say, because though there was no thought of sex left in my conscious-

ness, his was a courageous, inventive, masterful spirit, which gave rather than received, and was withal of a perfect kindness and directness, love undefiled and strong. The moment I became aware of his presence, I felt him to be like one of those wonderful, pure youths of an Italian picture, whose whole mind is set on manful things, untroubled by the love of woman, and yet finding all the world intensely gracious and beautiful, full of eager frankness, even impatience, with long, slim, straight limbs and close-curled hair. I knew him to be the sort of being that painters and poets had been feeling after when they represented or spoke of angels. And I could not help laughing outright at the thought of the meek, mild, statuesque draped figures, with absurd wings and depressing smiles, that encumbered pictures and churches, with whom no human communication would be possible, and whose grave and discomfiting glance would be fatal to all ease or merriment. I recognised

in Amroth a mirthful soul, full of humour and laughter, who could not be shocked by any truth, or hold anything uncomfortably sacred—though indeed he held all things sacred with a kind of eagerness that charmed me. Instead of meeting him in dolorous pietistic mood, I met him, I remember, as at school or college one suddenly met a frank, smiling, high-spirited youth or boy, who was ready at once to take comradeship for granted, and walked away with one from a gathering, with an outrush of talk and plans for further meetings. It was all so utterly unlike the subdued and cautious and sensitive atmosphere of devotion that it stirred us both, I was aware, to a delicious kind of laughter. And then came a swift interchange of thought, which I must try to represent by speech, though speech was none.

"I am glad to find you, Amroth," I said. "I was just beginning to wonder if I was not going to be lonely."

"Ah," he said, "one has what one desires

here; you had too much to see and learn at first to want my company. And yet I have been with you, pointing out a thousand things, ever since you came here."

"Was it you," I said, "that have been showing me all this? I thought I was alone."

At which Amroth laughed again, a laugh full of content. "Yes," he said, "the crags and the sunset—do you not remember? I came down with you, carrying you like a child in my arms, while you slept; and then I saw you awake. You had to rest a long time at first; you had had much to bear—uncertainty—that is what tires one, even more than pain. And I have been telling you things ever since, when you could listen."

"Oh," I said, "I have a hundred things to ask you; how strange it is to see so much and understand so little!"

"Ask away," said Amroth, putting an arm through mine.

"I was afraid," I said, "that it would

all be so different—like a catechism 'Dost thou believe—is this thy desire?' But instead it seems so entirely natural and simple!"

"Ah," he said, "that is how we bewilder ourselves on earth. Why, it is hard to say! But all the real things remain. It is all just as surprising and interesting and amusing and curious as it ever was: the only things that are gone—for a time, that is—are the things that are ugly and sad. But they are useful too in their way, though you have no need to think of them now. Those are just the discipline, the training."

"But," I said, "what makes people so different from each other down there—so many people who are sordid, grubby, quarrelsome, cruel, selfish, spiteful? Only a few who are bold and kind—like you, for instance?"

"No," he said, answering the thought that rose in my mind, "of course I don't mind—I like compliments as well as ever, if they come naturally! But don't you see

that all the little poky, sensual, mean, disgusting lives are simply those of spirits struggling to be free; we begin by being enchained by matter at first, and then the stream runs clearer. The divine things are imagination and sympathy. That is the secret."

IV

Once I said:

"Which kind of people do you find it hardest to help along?"

"The young people," said Amroth, with a smile.

"Youth!" I said. "Why, down below, we think of youth as being so generous and ardent and imitative! We speak of youth as the time to learn, and form fine habits; if a man is wilful and selfish in after-life, we say that it was because he was too much indulged in childhood—and we attach great importance to the impressions of youth."

"That is quite right," said Amroth, "because the impressions of youth are swift and keen; but of course, here, age is not a question of years or failing powers. The old, here, are the wise and gracious and patient and gentle; the youth of the spirit is stu-

pidity and unimaginativeness. On the one hand are the stolid and placid, and on the other are the brutal and cruel and selfish and unrestrained."

"You confuse me greatly," I said; "surely you do not mean that spiritual life and progress are a matter of intellectual energy?"

"No, not at all," said he; "the so-called intellectual people are often the most stupid and youngest of all. The intellect counts for nothing: that is only a kind of dexterity, a pretty game. The imagination is what matters."

"Worse and worse!" I said. "Does salvation belong to poets and novelists?"

"No, no," said Amroth, "that is a game too! The imagination I speak of is the power of entering into other people's minds and hearts, of putting yourself in their place—of loving them, in fact. The more you know of people, the better chance there is of loving them; and you can only find your way into their minds by imaginative

sympathy. I will tell you a story which will show you what I mean. There was once a famous writer on earth, of whose wisdom people spoke with bated breath. Men went to see him with fear and reverence, and came away, saying, 'How wonderful!' And this man, in his age, was waited upon by a little maid, an ugly, tired, tiny creature. People used to say that they wondered he had not a better servant. But she knew all that he liked and wanted, where his books and papers were, what was good for him to do. She did not understand a word of what he said, but she knew both when he had talked too much, and when he had not talked enough, so that his mind was pent up in itself, and he became cross and fractious. Now, in reality, the little maid was one of the oldest and most beautiful of spirits. She had lived many lives, each apparently humbler than the last. She never grumbled about her work, or wanted to amuse herself. She loved the silly flies that darted about her kitchen, or

brushed their black heads on the ceiling; she loved the ivy tendrils that tapped on her window in the breeze. She did not go to church, she had no time for that; or if she had gone, she would not have understood what was said, though she would have loved all the people there, and noticed how they looked and sang. But the wise man himself was one of the youngest and stupidest of spirits, so young and stupid that he had to have a very old and wise spirit to look after him. He was eaten up with ideas and vanity, so that he had no time to look at any one or think of anybody, unless they praised him. He has a very long pilgrimage before him, though he wrote pretty songs enough, and his mortal body, or one of them, lies in the Poets' Corner of the Abbey, and people come and put wreaths there with tears in their eyes."

"It is very bewildering," I said, "but I see a little more than I did. It is all a matter of feeling, then? But it seems hard on people that they should be so dull and

stupid about it all,—that the truth should lie so close to their hand and yet be so carefully concealed."

"Oh, they grow out of dulness!" he said, with a movement of his hand; "that is what experience does for us—it is always going on; we get widened and deepened. Why," he added, "I have seen a great man, as they called him, clever and alert, who held a high position in the State. He was laid aside by a long and painful illness, so that all his work was put away. He was brave about it, too, I remember; but he used to think to himself how sad and wasteful it was, that when he was most energetic and capable he should be put on the shelf—all the fine work he might have done interrupted; all the great speeches he would have made unuttered. But as a matter of fact, he was then for the first time growing fast, because he had to look into the minds and hearts of all sorrowful and disappointed people, and to learn that what we do matters so little, and that what we are matters

so much. When he did at last get back to the world, people said, 'What a sad pity to see so fine a career spoilt!' But out of all the years of all his lives, those years had been his very best and richest, when he sat half the day feeble in the sun, and could not even look at the papers which lay beside him, or when he woke in the grey mornings, with the thought of another miserable day of idleness and pain before him."

I said, "Then is it a bad thing to be busy in the world, because it takes off your mind from the things which matter?"

"No," said Amroth, "not a bad thing at all: because two things are going on. Partly the framework of society and life is being made, so that men are not ground down into that sordid struggle, when little experience is possible because of the drudgery which clouds all the mind. Though even that has its opportunities! And all depends, for the individual, upon how he is doing his work. If he has other people in mind all the time, and does his work for

them, and not to be praised for it, then all is well. But if he is thinking of his credit and his position, then he does not grow at all; that is pomposity—a very youthful thing indeed; but the worst case of all is if a man sees that the world must be helped and made, and that one can win credit thus, and so engages in work of that kind, and deals in all the jargon of it, about using influence and living for others, when he is really thinking of himself all the time, and trying to keep the eyes of the world upon him. But it is all growth really, though sometimes, as on the beach when the tide is coming in, the waves seem to draw backward from the land, and poise themselves in a crest of troubled water."

"But is a great position in the world," I said, "whether inherited or attained, a dangerous thing?"

"Nothing is *dangerous,* child," he said. "You must put all that out of your mind. But men in high posts and stations are often not progressing evenly, only in great

jogs and starts. They learn very often, with a sudden surprise, which is not always painful, and sometimes is very beautiful and sweet, that all the ceremony and pomp, the great house, the bows and the smiles, mean nothing at all—absolutely nothing, except the chance, the opportunity of not being taken in by them. That is the use of all pleasures and all satisfactions—the frame of mind which made the old king say, 'Is not this great Babylon, which I have builded?'—they are nothing but the work of another class in the great school of life. A great many people are put to school with self-satisfaction, that they may know the fine joy of humiliation, the delight of learning that it is not effectiveness and applause that matters, but love and peacefulness. And the great thing is that we should feel that we are growing, not in hardness or indifference, nor necessarily even in courage or patience, but in our power to feel and our power to suffer. As love multiplies, suffering must multiply too. The very

Heart of God is full of infinite, joyful, hopeful suffering; the whole thing is so vast, so slow, so quiet, that the end of suffering is yet far off. But when we suffer, we climb fast; the spirit grows old and wise in faith and love; and suffering is the one thing we cannot dispense with, because it is the condition of our fullest and purest life."

V

I said suddenly, "The joy of this place is not the security of it, but the fact that one has not to think about security. I am not afraid of anything that may happen, and there is no weariness of thought. One does not think till one is tired, but till one has finished thinking."

"Yes," said Amroth, "that was the misery of the poor body!"

"And yet I used to think," I said, "in the old days that I was grateful to the body for many pleasant things it gave me—breathing the air, feeling the sun, eating and drinking, games and exercise, and the strange thing one called love."

"Yes," said Amroth, "all those things have to be made pleasant, or to appear so; otherwise no one could submit to the discipline at all; but of course the pleasure

only got in the way of the thought and of the happiness; it was not what one saw, tasted, smelt, felt, that one desired, but the real thing behind it; even the purest thing of all, the sight and contact of one whom one loved, let us say, with no sensual passion at all, but with a perfectly pure love; what a torment that was—desiring something which one could not get, the real fusion of feeling and thought! But the poor body was always in the way then, saying, 'Here am I—please me, amuse me.'"

"But then," I said, "what is the use of all that? Why should the pure, clear, joyful, sleepless life I now feel be tainted and hampered and drugged by the body? I don't feel that I am losing anything by losing the body."

"No, not losing," said Amroth, "but, happy though you are, you are not gaining things as fast now—it is your time of rest and refreshment—but we shall go back, both of us, to the other life again, when

the time comes: and the point is this, that we have got to win the best things through trouble and struggle."

"But even so," I said, "there are many things I do not understand—the child that opens its eyes upon the world and closes them again; the young child that suffers and dies, just when it is the darling of the home; and at the other end of the scale, the helpless, fractious invalid, or the old man who lives in weariness, wakeful and tortured, and who is glad just to sit in the sun, indifferent to every one and everything, past feeling and hoping and thinking—or, worst of all, the people with diseased minds, whose pain makes them suspicious and malignant. What is the meaning of all this pain, which seems to do people nothing but harm, and makes them a burden to themselves and others too?"

"Oh," said he, "it is difficult enough; but you must remember that we are all bound up with the hearts and lives of others; the child that dies in its helplessness has a

meaning for its parents; the child that lives long enough to be the light of its home, that has a significance deep enough; and all those who have to tend and care for the sick, to lighten the burden and the sorrow for them, that has a meaning surely for all concerned? The reason why we feel as we do about broken lives, why they seem so utterly purposeless, is because we have the proportion so wrong. We do not really, in fact, believe in immortality, when we are bound in the body—some few of us do, and many of us say that we do. But we do not realise that the little life is but one in a great chain of lives, that each spirit lives many times, over and over. There is no such thing as waste or sacrifice of life. The life is meant to do just what it does, no more and no less; bound in the body, it all seems so long or so short, so complete or so incomplete; but now and here we can see that the whole thing is so endless, so immense, that we think no more of entering life, say, for a few

days, or entering it for ninety years, than we should think of counting one or ninety water-drops in the river that pours in a cataract over the lip of the rocks. Where we do lose, in life, is in not taking the particular experience, be it small or great, to heart. We try to forget things, to put them out of our minds, to banish them. Of course it is very hard to do otherwise, in a body so finite, tossed and whirled in a stream so infinite; and thus we are happiest if we can live very simply and quietly, not straining to multiply our uneasy activities, but just getting the most and the best out of the elements of life as they come to us. As we get older in spirit, we do that naturally; the things that men call ambitions and schemes are the signs of immaturity; and when we grow older, those slip off us and concern us no more; while the real vitality of feeling and emotion runs ever more clear and strong."

"But," I said, "can one revive the old lives at will? Can one look back into the

long range of previous lives? Is that permitted?"

"Yes, of course it is permitted," said Amroth, smiling; "there are no rules here; but one does not care to do it overmuch. One is just glad it is all done, and that one has learnt the lesson. Look back if you like—there are all the lives behind you."

I had a curious sensation—I saw myself suddenly a stalwart savage, strangely attired for war, near a hut in a forest clearing. I was going away somewhere; there were other huts at hand; there was a fire, in the side of a mound, where some women seemed to be cooking something and wrangling over it; the smoke went up into the still air. A child came out of the hut, and ran to me. I bent down and kissed it, and it clung to me. I was sorry, in a dim way, to be going out—for I saw other figures armed too, standing about the clearing. There was to be fighting that day, and though I wished to fight, I thought I might not return. But the mind of myself, as I

discerned it, was full of hurtful, cruel, rapacious thoughts, and I was sad to think that this could ever have been I.

"It is not very nice," said Amroth with a smile; "one does not care to revive that! You were young then, and had much before you."

Another picture flashed into the mind. Was it true? I was a woman, it seemed, looking out of a window on the street in a town with high, dark houses, strongly built of stone: there was a towered gate at a little distance, with some figures drawing up sacks with a pulley to a door in the gate. A man came up behind me, pulled me roughly back, and spoke angrily; I answered him fiercely and shrilly. The room I was in seemed to be a shop or store; there were barrels of wine, and bags of corn. I felt that I was busy and anxious—it was not a pleasant retrospect.

"Yet you were better then," said Amroth; "you thought little of your drudgery, and much of your children."

Yes, I had had children, I saw. Their

names and appearance floated before me. I had loved them tenderly. Had they passed out of my life? I felt bewildered.

Amroth laid a hand on my arm and smiled again. "No, you came near to some of them again. Do you not remember another life in which you loved a friend with a strange love, that surprised you by its nearness? He had been your child long before; and one never quite loses that."

I saw in a flash the other life he spoke of. I was a student, it seemed, at some university, where there was a boy of my own age, a curious, wilful, perverse, tactless creature, always saying and doing the wrong thing, for whom I had felt a curious and unreasonable responsibility. I had always tried to explain him to other people, to justify him; and he had turned to me for help and companionship in a singular way. I saw myself walking with him in the country, expostulating, gesticulating; and I saw him angry and perplexed. . . . The vision vanished.

"But what becomes of all those whom

we have loved?" I said; "it cannot be as if we had never loved them."

"No, indeed," said Amroth, "they are all there or here; but there lies one of the great mysteries which we cannot yet attain to. We shall be all brought together some time, closely and perfectly; but even now, in the world of matter, the spirit half remembers; and when one is strangely and lovingly drawn to another soul, when that love is not of the body, and has nothing of passion in it, then it is some close ancient tie reasserting itself. Do you not know how old and remote some of our friendships seemed—so much older and larger than could be accounted for by the brief days of companionship? That strange hunger for the past of one we love is nothing but the faint memory of what has been. Indeed, when you have rested happily a little longer, you will move farther afield, and you will come near to spirits you have loved. You cannot bear it yet, though they are all about you; but one regains the

spiritual sense slowly after a life like yours."

"Can I revisit," I said, "the scene of my last life—see and know what those I loved are doing and feeling?"

"Not yet," said Amroth; "that would not profit either you or them. The sorrow of earth would not be sorrow, it would have no cleansing power, if the parted spirit could return at once. You do not guess, either, how much of time has passed already since you came here—it seems to you like yesterday, no doubt, since you last suffered death. To meet loss and sorrow upon earth, without either comfort or hope, is one of the finest of lessons. When we are there, we must live blindly, and if we here could make our presence known at once to the friends we leave behind, it would be all too easy. It is in the silence of death that its virtue lies."

"Yes," I said, "I do not desire to return. This is all too wonderful. It is the freshness and sweetness of it all that comes home

to me. I do not desire to think of the body, and, strange to say, if I do think of it, the times that I remember gratefully are those when the body was faint and weary. The old joys and triumphs, when one laughed and loved and exulted, seem to me to have something ugly about them, because one was content, and wished things to remain for ever as they were. It was the longing for something different that helped me; the acquiescence was the shame."

VI

One day I said to Amroth, "What a comfort it is to find that there is no religion here!"

"I know what you mean," he said. "I think it is one of the things that one wonders at most, to remember into how very small and narrow a thing religion was made, and how much that was religious was never supposed to be so."

"Yes," I said, "as I think of it now, it seems to have been a game played by a few players, a game with a great many rules."

"Yes," he said, "it was a game often enough; but of course the mischief of it was, that when it was most a game it most pretended to be something else—to contain the secret of life and all knowledge."

"I used to think," I said, "that religion was like a noble and generous boy with the lyrical heart of a poet, made by some sad chance into a king, surrounded by obsequious respect and pomp and etiquette, bound by a hundred ceremonious rules, forbidden to do this and that, taught to think that his one duty was to be magnificently attired, to acquire graceful arts of posture and courtesy, subtly and gently prevented from obeying natural and simple impulses, made powerless—a crowned slave; so that, instead of being the freest and sincerest thing in the world, it became the prisoner of respectability and convention, just a part of the social machine."

"That was only one side of it," said Amroth. "It was often where it was least supposed to be."

"Yes," I said, "as far as I resent anything now, I resent the conversion of so much religion from an inspiring force into a repressive force. One learnt as a child to think of it, not as a great moving flood

of energy and joy, but as an awful power apart from life, rejoicing in petty restrictions, and mainly concerned with creating an unreal atmosphere of narrow piety, hostile to natural talk and laughter and freedom. God's aid was invoked, in childhood, mostly when one was naughty and disobedient, so that one grew to think of Him as grim, severe, irritable, anxious to interfere. What wonder that one lost all wish to meet God and all natural desire to know Him! One thought of Him as impossible to please except by behaving in a way in which it was not natural to behave; and one thought of religion as a stern and dreadful process going on somewhere, like a law-court or a prison, which one had to keep clear of if one could. Yet I hardly see how, in the interests of discipline, it could have been avoided. If only one could have begun at the other end!"

"Yes," said Amroth, "but that is because religion has fallen so much into the hands of the wrong people, and is grievously mis-

represented. It has too often come to be identified, as you say, with human law, as a power which leaves one severely alone, if one behaves oneself, and which punishes harshly and mechanically if one outsteps the limit. It comes into the world as a great joyful motive; and then it becomes identified with respectability, and it is sad to think that it is simply from the fact that it has won the confidence of the world that it gains its awful power of silencing and oppressing. It becomes hostile to frankness and independence, and puts a premium on caution and submissiveness; but that is the misuse of it and the degradation of it; and religion is still the most pure and beautiful thing in the world for all that; the doctrine itself is fine and true in a way, if one can view it without impatience; it upholds the right things; it all makes for peace and order, and even for humility and just kindliness; it insists, or tries to insist, on the fact that property and position and material things do not matter, and that quality and method

do matter. Of course it is terribly distorted, and gets into the hands of the wrong people—the people who want to keep things as they are. Now the Gospel, as it first came, was a perfectly beautiful thing—the idea that one must act by tender impulse, that one must always forgive, and forget, and love; that one must take a natural joy in the simplest things, find every one and everything interesting and delightful . . . the perfectly natural, just, good-humoured, uncalculating life—that was the idea of it; and that one was not to be superior to the hard facts of the world, not to try to put sorrow or pain out of sight, but to live eagerly and hopefully in them and through them; not to try to school oneself into hardness or indifference, but to love lovable things, and not to condemn or despise the unlovable. That was indeed a message out of the very heart of God. But of course all the acrid divisions and subdivisions of it come, not from itself, but from the material part of the world, that determines to traffic

with the beautiful secret, and make it serve its turn. But there are plenty of true souls within it all, true teachers, faithful learners—and the world cannot do without it yet, though it is strangely fettered and bound. Indeed, men can never do without it, because the spiritual force is there; it is full of poetry and mystery, that ageless brotherhood of saints and true-hearted disciples; but one has to learn that many that claim its powers have them not, while many who are outside all organisations have the secret."

"Yes," I said, "all that is true and good; it is the exclusive claim and not the inclusive which one regrets. It is the voice which says, 'Accept my exact faith, or you have no part in the inheritance,' which is wrong. The real voice of religion is that which says, 'You are my brother and my sister, though you know it not.' And if one says, 'We are all at fault, we are all far from the truth, but we live as best we can, looking for the larger hope and for

the dawn of love,' that is the secret. The sacrament of God is offered and eaten at many a social meal, and the Spirit of Love finds utterance in quiet words from smiling lips. One cannot teach by harsh precept, only by desirable example; and the worst of the correct profession of religion is that it is often little more than taking out a licence to disapprove."

"Yes," said Amroth, "you are very near a great truth. The mistake we make is like the mistake so often made on earth in matters of human government—the opposing of the individual to the State, as if the State were something above and different to the individual—like the old thought of the Spirit moving on the face of the waters. The individual is the State; and it is the same with the soul and God. God is not above the soul, seeing and judging, apart in isolation. The Spirit of God is the spirit of humanity, the spirit of admiration, the spirit of love. It matters little what the soul admires and loves, whether it be a flower or

a mountain, a face or a cause, a gem or a doctrine. It is that wonderful power that the current of the soul has of setting towards something that is beautiful: the need to admire, to worship, to love. A regiment of soldiers in the street, a procession of priests to a sanctuary, a march of disordered women clamouring for their rights —if the idea thrills you, if it uplifts you, it matters nothing whether other people dislike or despise or deride it—it is the voice of God for you. We must advance from what is merely brilliant to what is true; and though in the single life many a man seems to halt at a certain point, to have tied up his little packet of admirations once and for all, there are other lives where he will pass on to further loves, his passion growing more intense and pure. We are not limited by our circle, by our generation, by our age; and the things which youthful spirits are divining and proclaiming as great and wonderful discoveries, are often being practised and done by silent and

humble souls. It is not the concise or impressive statement of a truth that matters, it is the intensity of the inner impulse towards what is high and true which differentiates. The more we live by that, the less are we inclined to argue and dispute about it. The base, the impure desire is only the imperfect desire; if it is gratified, it reveals its imperfections, and the soul knows that not there can it stay; but it must have faced and tested everything. If the soul, out of timidity and conventionality, says 'No' to its eager impulses, it halts upon its pilgrimage. Some of the most grievous and shameful lives on earth have been fruitful enough in reality. The reason why we mourn and despond over them is, again, that we limit our hope to the single life. There is time for everything; we must not be impatient. We must despair of nothing and of no one; the true life consists not in what a man's reason approves or disapproves, not in what he does or says, but in what he sees. It is

useless to explain things to souls; they must experience them to apprehend them. The one treachery is to speak of mistakes as irreparable, and of sins as unforgivable. The sin against the Spirit is to doubt the Spirit, and the sin against life is not to use it generously and freely; we are happiest if we love others well enough to give our life to them; but it is better to use life for ourselves than not to use it at all."

VII

One day I said to Amroth, "Are there no rules of life here? It seems almost too good to be true, not to be found fault with and censured and advised and blamed."

"Oh," said Amroth, laughing, "there are plenty of *rules,* as you call them; but one feels them, one is not told them; it is like breathing and seeing."

"Yes," I replied, "yet it was like that, too, in the old days; the misery was when one suddenly discovered that when one was acting in what seemed the most natural way possible, it gave pain and concern to some one whom one respected and even loved. One knew that one's action was not wrong, and yet one desired to please and satisfy one's friends; and so one fell back into conventional ways, not because one liked them but because other people did, and it was

not worth while making a fuss—it was a sort of cowardice, I suppose?"

"Not quite," said Amroth; "you were more on the right lines than the people who interfered with you, no doubt; but of course the truth is that our principles ought to be used, like a stick, to support ourselves, not like a rod to beat other people with. The most difficult people to teach, as you will see hereafter, are the self-righteous people, whose lives are really pure and good, but who allow their preferences about amusements, occupations, ways of life, to become matters of principle. The worst temptation in the world is the habit of influence and authority, the desire to direct other lives and to conform them to one's own standard. The only way in which we can help other people is by loving them; by frightening another out of something which he is apt to do and of which one does not approve, one effects absolutely nothing: sin cannot be scared away; the spirit must learn to desire to cast it away, because it

sees that goodness is beautiful and fine; and this can only be done by example, never by precept."

"But it is the entire absence of both that puzzles me here," I said. "Nothing to do and a friend to talk to; it's a lazy business, I think."

Amroth looked at me with amusement. "It's a sign," he said, "if you feel that, that you are getting rested, and ready to move on; but you will be very much surprised when you know a little more about the life here. You are like a baby in a cradle at present; when you come to enter one of our communities here, you will find it as complicated a business as you could wish. Part of the difficulty is that there are no rules, to use your own phrase. It is real democracy, but it is not complicated by any questions of property, which is the thing that clogs all political progress in the world below. There is nothing to scheme for, no ambitions to gratify, nothing to gain at the expense of others; the only thing that

matters is one's personal relation to others; and this is what makes it at once so simple and so complex. But I do not think it is of any use to tell you all this; you will see it in a flash, when the time comes. But it may be as well for you to remember that there will be no one to command you or compel you or advise you. Your own heart and spirit will be your only guides. There is no such thing as compulsion or force in heaven. Nothing can be done to you that you do not choose or allow to be done."

"Yes," I said, "it is the blessed and beautiful sense of freedom from all ties and influences and fears that is so utterly blissful."

"But this is not all," said Amroth, shaking his head with a smile. "This is a time of rest for you, but things are very different elsewhere. When you come to enter heaven itself, you will be constantly surprised. There are labour and fear and sorrow to be faced; and you must not think it is a

place for drifting pleasantly along. The moral struggle is the same—indeed it is fiercer and stronger than ever, because there is no bodily languor or fatigue to distract. There are choices to be made, duties to perform, evil to be faced. The bodily temptations are absent, but there is still that which lay behind the bodily frailties—curiosity, love of sensation, excitement, desire; the strong duality of nature—the knowledge of duty on the one hand and the indolent shrinking from performance—that is all there; there is the same sense of isolation, and the same need for patient endeavour as upon earth. All that one gets is a certain freedom of movement; one is not bound to places and employments by the material ties of earth; but you must not think that it is all to be easy and straightforward. We can each of us by using our wills shorten our probation, by not resisting influences, by putting our hearts and minds in unison with the will of God for us; and that is easier in heaven than upon earth, because

there is less to distract us. But on the other hand, there is more temptation to drift, because there are no material consequences to stimulate us. There are many people on earth who exercise a sort of practical virtue simply to avoid material inconveniences, while there is no such motive in heaven; I say all this not to disturb your present tranquillity, which it is your duty now to enjoy, but just to prepare you. You must be prepared for effort and for endeavour, and even for strife. You must use right judgment, and, above all, common sense; one does not get out of the reach of that in heaven!"

VIII

THESE are only some of the many talks I had with Amroth. They ranged over a great many subjects and thoughts. What I cannot indicate, however, is the lightness and freshness of them; and above all, their entire frankness and amusingness. There were times when we talked like two children, revived old simple adventures of life—he had lived far more largely and fully than I had done—and I never tired of hearing the tales of his old lives, so much more varied and wonderful than my own. Sometimes we merely told each other stories out of our imaginations and hearts. We even played games, which I cannot describe, but they were like the games of earth. We seemed at times to walk and wander together; but I had a sense all this time that I was, so

to speak, in hospital, being tended and cared for, and not allowed to do anything wearisome or demanding effort. But I became more and more aware of other spirits about me, like birds that chirp and twitter in the ivy of a tower, or in the thick bushes of a shrubbery. Amroth told me one day that I must prepare for a great change soon, and I found myself wondering what it would be like, half excited about it, and half afraid, unwilling as I was to lose the sweet rest, and the dear companionship of a friend who seemed like the crown and sum of all hopes of friendship. Amroth became utterly dear to me, and it was a joy beyond all joys to feel his happy and smiling nature bent upon me, hour by hour, in sympathy and understanding and love. He said to me laughingly once that I had much of earth about me yet, and that I must soon learn not to bend my thoughts so exclusively one way and on one friend.

"Yes," I said, "I am not fit for heaven yet! I believe I am jealous; I cannot bear

to think that you will leave me, or that any other soul deserves your attention."

"Oh," he said lightly, "this is my business and delight now—but you will soon have to do for others what I am doing for you. You like this easy life at present, but you can hardly imagine how interesting it is to have some one given you for your own, as you were given to me. It is the delight of motherhood and fatherhood in one; and when I was allowed to take you away out of the room where you lay—I admit it was not a pleasant scene—I felt just like a child who is given a kitten for its very own."

"Well," I said, "I have been a very satisfactory pet—I have done little else but purr." I felt his eyes upon me in a wonderful nearness of love; and then I looked up and I saw that we were not alone.

It was then that I first perceived that there could be grief in heaven. I say "first perceived," but I had known it all along. But by Amroth's gentle power that had been

for a time kept away from me, that I might rest and rejoice.

The form before me was that of a very young and beautiful woman—so beautiful that for a moment all my thought seemed to be concentrated upon her. But I saw, too, that all was not well with her. She was not at peace with herself, or her surroundings. In her great wide eyes there was a look of pain, and of rebellious pain. She was attired in a robe that was a blaze of colour; and when I wondered at this, for it was unlike the clear hues, pearly grey and gold, and soft roseate light that had hitherto encompassed me, the voice of Amroth answered my unuttered question, and said, "It is the image of her thought." Her slim white hands moved aimlessly over the robe, and seemed to finger the jewels which adorned it. Her lips were parted, and anything more beautiful than the pure curves of her chin and neck I had seldom seen, though she seemed never to be still, as Amroth was still, but to move restlessly and

wearily about. I knew by a sort of intuition that she was unaware of Amroth and only aware of myself. She seemed startled and surprised at the sight of me, and I wondered in what form I appeared to her; in a moment she spoke, and her voice was low and thrilling.

"I am so glad," she said in a half-courteous, half-distracted way, "to find some one in the place to whom I can speak. I seem to be always moving in a crowd, and yet to see no one—they are afraid of me, I think; and it is not what I expected, not what I am used to. I am in need of help, I feel, and yet I do not know what sort of help it is that I want. May I stay with you a little?"

"Why, yes," I said; "there is no question of 'may' here."

She came up to me with a sort of proud confidence, and looked at me fixedly. "Yes," she said, "I see that I can trust you; and I am tired of being deceived!" Then she added with a sort of pettishness,

"I have nowhere to go, nothing to do—it is all dull and cold. On earth it was just the opposite. I had only too much attention and love. . . . Oh, yes," she added with a strange glance, "it was what you would probably call sinful. The only man I ever loved did not care for me, and I was loved by many for whom I did not care. Well, I had my pleasures, and I suppose I must pay for them. I do not complain of that. But I am determined not to give way: it is unjust and cruel. I never had a chance. I was always brought up to be admired from the first. We were rich at my home, and in society—you understand? I made what was called a good match, and I never cared for my husband, but amused myself with other people; and it was splendid while it lasted: then all kinds of horrible things happened—scenes, explanations, a lawsuit—it makes me shudder to remember it all; and then I was ill, I suppose, and suddenly it was all over, and I was alone, with a feeling that I must

try to take up with all kinds of tiresome things—all the things that bored me most. But now it may be going to be better; you can tell me where I can find people, perhaps? I am not quite unpresentable, even here? No, I can see that in your face. Well, take me somewhere, show me something, find something for me to do in this deadly place. I seem to have got into a perpetual sunset, and I am so sick of it all."

I felt very helpless before this beautiful creature who seemed so troubled and discontented. "No," said the voice of Amroth beside me, "it is of no use to talk; let her talk to you; let her make friends with you if she can."

"That 's better," she said, looking at me. "I was afraid you were going to be grave and serious. I felt for a minute as if I was going to be confirmed."

"No," I said, "you need not be disturbed; nothing will be done to you against your wish. One has but to wish here, or to be willing, and the right thing happens."

She came close to me as I said this, and said, "Well, I think I shall like you, if only you can promise not to be serious." Then she turned, and stood for a moment disconsolate, looking away from me.

All this while the atmosphere around me had been becoming lighter and clearer, as though a mist were rising. Suddenly Amroth said, "You will have to go with her for a time, and do what you can. I must leave you for a little, but I shall not be far off; and if you need me, I shall be at hand. But do not call for me unless you are quite sure you need me." He gave me a hand-clasp and a smile, and was gone.

Then, looking about me, I saw at last that I was in a place. Lonely and bare though it was, it seemed to me very beautiful. It was like a grassy upland, with rocky heights to left and right. They were most delicate in outline, those crags, like the crags in an old picture, with sharp, smooth curves, like a fractured crystal. They seemed to be of a creamy stone, and the

shadows fell blue and distinct. Down below was a great plain full of trees and waters, all very dim. A path, worn lightly in the grass, lay at my feet, and I knew that we must descend it. The girl with me —I will call her Cynthia—was gazing at it with delight. "Ah," she said, "I can see clearly now. This is something like a real place, instead of mist and light. We can find people down here, no doubt; it looks inhabited out there." She pointed with her hand, and it seemed to me that I could see spires and towers and roofs, of a fine and airy architecture, at the end of a long horn of water which lay very blue among the woods of the plain. It puzzled me, because I had the sense that it was all unreal, and, indeed, I soon perceived that it was the girl's own thought that in some way affected mine. "Quick, let us go," she said; "what are we waiting for?"

The descent was easy and gradual. We came down, following the path, over the hill-shoulders. A stream of clear water

dripped among stones; it all brought back to me with an intense delight the recollection of long days spent among such hills in holiday times on earth, but all without regret; I only wished that an old and dear friend of mine, with whom I had often gone, might be with me. He had quitted life before me, and I knew somehow or hoped that I should before long see him; but I did not wish things to be otherwise; and, indeed, I had a strange interest in the fretful, silly, lovely girl with me, and in what lay before us. She prattled on, and seemed to be recovering her spirits and her confidence at the sights around us. If I could but find anything that would draw her out of her restless mood into the peace of the morning! She had a charm for me, though her impatience and desire for amusement seemed uninteresting enough; and I found myself talking to her as an elder brother might, with terms of familiar endearment, which she seemed to be grateful for. It was strange in a way, and yet it all appeared

natural. The more we drew away from the hills, the happier she became. "Ah," she said once, "we have got out of that hateful place, and now perhaps we may be more comfortable,"—and when we came down beside the stream to a grove of trees, and saw something which seemed like a road beneath us, she was delighted. "That 's more like it," she said, "and now we may find some real people perhaps,"—she turned to me with a smile—"though you are real enough too, and very kind to me; but I still have an idea that you are a clergyman, and are only waiting your time to draw a moral."

IX

Now before I go on to tell the tale of what happened to us in the valley there were two very curious things that I observed or began to observe.

The first was that I could not really see into the girl's thought. I became aware that though I could see into the thought of Amroth as easily and directly as one can look into a clear sea-pool, with all its rounded pebbles and its swaying fringes of seaweed, there was in the girl's mind a centre of thought to which I was not admitted, a fortress of personality into which I could not force my way. More than that. When she mistrusted or suspected me, there came a kind of cloud out from the central thought, as if a turbid stream were poured into the sea-pool, which obscured her thoughts from me, though when she came

to know me and to trust me, as she did later, the cloud was gradually withdrawn; and I perceived that there must be a perfect sacrifice of will, an intention that the mind should lie open and unashamed before the thought of one's friend and companion, before the vision can be complete. With Amroth I desired to conceal nothing, and he had no concealment from me. But with the girl it was different. There was something in her heart that she hid from me, and by no effort could I penetrate it; and I saw then that there is something at the centre of the soul which is our very own, and into which God Himself cannot even look, unless we desire that He should look; and even if we desire that He should look into our souls, if there is any timidity or shame or shrinking about us, we cannot open our souls to Him. I must speak about this later, when the great and wonderful day came to me, when I beheld God and was beheld by Him. But now, though when the girl trusted me I could see much of her

thought, the inmost cell of it was still hidden from me.

And then, too, I perceived another strange thing; that the landscape in which we walked was very plain to me, but that she did not see the same things that I saw. With me, the landscape was such as I had loved most in my last experience of life; it was a land to me like the English hill-country which I loved the best; little fields of pasture mostly, with hedgerow ashes and sycamores, and here and there a clear stream of water running by the wood-ends. There were buildings, too, low white-walled farms, roughly slated, much-weathered, with evidences of homely life, byre and barn and granary, all about them. These sloping fields ran up into high moorlands and little grey crags, with the trees and thickets growing in the rock fronts. I could not think that people lived in these houses and practised agriculture, though I saw with surprise and pleasure that there were animals about, horses and sheep grazing, and dogs

that frisked in and out. I had always believed and hoped that animals had their share in the inheritance of light, and now I thought that this was a proof that it was indeed so, though I could not be sure of it, because I realised that it might be but the thoughts of my mind taking shape, for, as I say, I was gradually aware that the girl did not see what I saw. To her it was a different scene, of some southern country, because she seemed to see vineyards, and high-walled lanes, hill-crests crowded with houses and crowned with churches, such as one sees at a distance in the Campagna, where the plain breaks into chestnut-clad hills. But this difference of sight did not make me feel that the scene was in any degree unreal; it was the idea of the landscape which we loved, its pretty associations and familiar features, and the mind did the rest, translating it all into a vision of scenes which had given us joy on earth, just as we do in dreams when we are in the body, when the sleeping mind creates sights which

give us pleasure, and yet we have no knowledge that we are ourselves creating them. So we walked together, until I perceived that we were drawing near to the town which we had discerned.

And now we became aware of people going to and fro. Sometimes they stopped and looked upon us with smiles, and even greetings; and sometimes they went past absorbed in thought.

Houses appeared, both small wayside abodes and larger mansions with sheltered gardens. What it all meant I hardly knew; but just as we have perfectly decided tastes on earth as to what sort of a house we like and why we like it, whether we prefer high, bright rooms, or rooms low and with subdued light, so in that other country the mind creates what it desires.

Presently the houses grew thicker, and soon we were in a street—the town to my eyes was like the little towns one sees in the Cotswold country, of a beautiful golden stone, with deep plinths and cornices, with

older and simpler buildings interspersed. My companion became strangely excited, glancing this way and that. And presently, as if we were certainly expected, there came up to us a kindly and grave person, who welcomed us formally to the place, and said a few courteous words about his pleasure that we should have chosen to visit it.

I do not know how it was, but I did not wholly trust our host. His mind was hidden from me; and indeed I began to have a sense, not of evil, indeed, or of oppression, but a feeling that it was not the place appointed for me, but only where my business was to lie for a season. A group of people came up to us and welcomed my companion with great cheerfulness, and she was soon absorbed in talk.

X

Now before I come to tell this next part of my story, there are several things which seem in want of explanation. I speak of people as looking old and young, and of there being relations between them such as fatherly and motherly, sonlike and loverlike. It bewildered me at first, but I came to guess at the truth. It would seem that in the further world spirits do preserve for a long time the characteristics of the age at which they last left the earth; but I saw no very young children anywhere at first, though I came afterwards to know what befell them. It seemed to me that, in the first place I visited, the only spirits I saw were of those who had been able to make a deliberate choice of how they would live in the world and which kind of desires they would serve; it is very hard to say when

this choice takes place in the world below, but I came to believe that, early or late, there does come a time when there is an opening out of two paths before each human soul, and when it realises that a choice must be made. Sometimes this is made early in life; but sometimes a soul drifts on, guileless in a sense, though its life may be evil and purposeless, not looking backwards or forwards, but simply acting as its nature bids it act. What it is that decides the awakening of the will I hardly know; it is all a secret growth, I think; but the older that the spirit is, in the sense of spiritual experience, the earlier in mortal life that choice is made; and this is only another proof of one of the things which Amroth showed me, that it is, after all, imagination which really makes the difference between souls, and not intellect or shrewdness or energy; all the real things of life—sympathy, the power of entering into fine relations, however simple they may be, with others, loyalty, patience, devotion,

goodness—seem to grow out of this power of imagination; and the reason why the souls of whom I am going to speak were so content to dwell where they were, was simply that they had no imagination beyond, but dwelt happily among the delights which upon earth are represented by sound and colour and scent and comeliness and comfort. This was a perpetual surprise to me, because I saw in these fine creatures such a faculty of delicate perception, that I could not help believing again and again that their emotions were as deep and varied too; but I found little by little, that they were all bent, not on loving, and therefore on giving themselves away to what they loved, but in gathering in perceptions and sensations, and finding their delight in them; and I realised that what lies at the root of the artistic nature is its deep and vital indifference to anything except what can directly give it delight, and that these souls, for all their amazing subtlety and discrimination, had very little hold on life

at all, except on its outer details and superficial harmonies; and that they were all very young in experience, and like shallow waters, easily troubled and easily appeased; and that therefore they were being dealt with like children, and allowed full scope for all their little sensitive fancies, until the time should come for them to go further yet. Of course they were one degree older than the people who in the world had been really immersed in what may be called solid interests and serious pursuits—science, politics, organisation, warfare, commerce—all these spirits were very youthful indeed, and they were, I suppose, in some very childish nursery of God. But what first bewildered me was the finding of the earthly proportions of things so strangely reversed, the serious matters of life so utterly set aside, and so much made of the things which many people take no sort of trouble about, as companionships and affections, which are so often turned into a matter of mere propinquity and circum-

stance. But of this I shall have to speak later in its place.

Now it is difficult to describe the time I spent in the land of delight, because it was all so unlike the life of the world, and yet was so strangely like it. There was work going on there, I found, but the nature of it I could not discern, because that was kept hidden from me. Men and women excused themselves from our company, saying they must return to their work; but most of the time was spent in leisurely converse about things which I confess from the first did not interest me. There was much wit and laughter, and there were constant games and assemblies and amusements. There were feasts of delicious things, music, dramas. There were books read and discussed; it was just like a very cultivated and civilised society. But what struck me about the people there was that it was all very restless and highly-strung, a perpetual tasting of pleasures, which somehow never pleased. There were two people there who

interested me most. One was a very handsome and courteous man, who seemed to desire my company, and spoke more freely than the rest; the other a young man, who was very much occupied with the girl, my companion, and made a great friendship with her. The elder of the two, for I must give them names, shall be called Charmides, which seems to correspond with his stately charm, and the younger may be known as Lucius.

I sat one day with Charmides, listening to a great concert of stringed and wind instruments, in a portico which gave on a large sheltered garden. He was much absorbed in the music, which was now of a brisk and measured beauty, and now of a sweet seriousness which had a very luxurious effect upon my mind. "It is wonderful to me," said Charmides, as the last movement drew to a close of liquid melody, "that these sounds should pass into the heart like wine, heightening and uplifting the thought—there is nothing so beauti-

ful as the discrimination of mood with which it affects one, weighing one delicate phrase against another, and finding all so perfect."

"Yes," I said, "I can understand that; but I must confess that there seems to me something wanting in the melodies of this place. The music which I loved in the old days was the music which spoke to the soul of something further yet and unattainable; but here the music seems to have attained its end, and to have fulfilled its own desire."

"Yes," said Charmides, "I know that you feel that; your mind is very clear to me, up to a certain point; and I have sometimes wondered why you spend your time here, because you are not one of us, as your friend Cynthia is."

I glanced, as he spoke, to where Cynthia sat on a great carved settle among cushions, side by side with Lucius, whispering to him with a smile.

"No," I said, "I do not think I have

found my place yet, but I am here, I think, for a purpose, and I do not know what that purpose is."

"Well," he said, "I have sometimes wondered myself. I feel that you may have something to tell me, some message for me. I thought that when I first saw you; but I cannot quite perceive what is in your mind, and I see that you do not wholly know what is in mine. I have been here for a long time, and I have a sense that I do not get on, do not move; and yet I have lived in extreme joy and contentment, except that I dread to return to life, as I know I must return. I have lived often, and always in joy—but in life there are constantly things to endure, little things which just ruffle the serenity of soul which I desire, and which I may fairly say I here enjoy. I have loved beauty, and not intemperately; and there have been other people—men and women—whom I have loved, in a sense; but the love of them has always seemed a sort of interruption to the life I

desired, something disordered and strained, which hurt me, and kept me away from the peace I desired—from the fine weighing of sounds and colours, and the pleasure of beautiful forms and lines; and I dread to return to life, because one cannot avoid love and sorrow, and mean troubles, which waste the spirit in vain."

"Yes," I said, "I can understand what you feel very well, because I too have known what it is to desire to live in peace and beauty, not to be disturbed or fretted; but the reason, I think, why it is dangerous, is not because life becomes too *easy*. That is not the danger at all—life is never easy, whatever it is! But the danger is that it grows too solemn! One is apt to become like a priest, always celebrating holy mysteries, always in a vision, with no time for laughter, and disputing, and quarrelling, and being silly and playing. It is the poor body again that is amiss. It is like the camel, poor thing; it groans and weeps, but it goes on. One cannot live wholly in a

vision; and life does not become more simple so, but more complicated, for one's time and energy are spent in avoiding the sordid and the tiresome things which one cannot and must not avoid. I remember, in an illness which I had, when I was depressed and fanciful, a homely old doctor said to me, 'Don't be too careful of yourself: don't think you can't bear this and that—go out to dinner—eat and drink rather too much!' It seemed to be coarse advice, but it was wise."

"Yes," said Charmides, "it was wise; but it is difficult to feel it so at the time. I wonder! I think perhaps I have made the mistake of being too fastidious. But it seemed so fine a goal that one had in sight, to chasten and temper all one's thoughts to what was beautiful—to judge and distinguish, to choose the right tones and harmonies, to be always rejecting and refining. It had its sorrows, of course. How often in the old days one came in contact with some gracious and beautiful personality, and

flung oneself into close relations; and then one began to see this and that flaw. There were lapses in tact, petulances, littlenesses; one's friend did not rightly use his beautiful mind; he was jealous, suspicious, trivial, petty; it ended in disillusionment. Instead of taking him as a passenger on one's vessel, and determining to live at peace, to overlook, to accommodate, one began to watch for an opportunity of putting him down courteously at some stopping-place; and instead of being grateful for his friendship, one was vexed with him for disappointing one. We must speak more of these things. I seem to feel the want of something commoner and broader in my thoughts; but in this place it is hard to change."

"Will you forgive me then," I said, "if I ask you plainly what this place is? It seems very strange to me, and yet I think I have been here before."

Charmides looked at me with a smile. "It has been called," he said, "by many ugly names, and men have been unreason-

ably afraid of it. It is the place of satisfied desire, and, as you see, it is a comfortable place enough. The theologians in their coarse way call it Hell, though that is a word which is forbidden here; it is indeed a sort of treason to use the word, because of its unfortunate association—and you can see with your own eyes that I have done wrong even to speak of it."

I looked round, and saw indeed that a visible tremor had fallen on the groups about us; it was as though a cold cloud, full of hail and darkness, had floated over a sunny sky. People were hurrying out of the garden, and some were regarding us askance and with frowns of disapproval. In a moment or two we were left alone.

"I have been indiscreet," said Charmides, "but I feel somehow in a rebellious mood; and indeed it has long seemed absurd to me that you should be unaware of the fact, and so obviously guileless! But I will speak no more of this to-day. People come and go

here very strangely, and I have sometimes wondered if it would not soon be time for me to go; but it would be idle to pretend that I have not been happy here."

XI

What Charmides had told me filled me with great astonishment; it seemed to me strange that I had not perceived the truth before. It made me feel that I had somehow been wasting time. I was tempted to call Amroth to my side, but I remembered what he had said, and I determined to resist the impulse. I half expected to find that our strange talk, and the very obvious disapproval of our words, had made some difference to me. But it was not the case. I found myself treated with the same smiling welcome as before, and indeed with an added kind of gentleness, such as older people give to a child who has been confronted with some hard fact of life, such as a sorrow or an illness. This in a way disconcerted me; for in the moment when I had perceived the truth, there had come over me the feeling

that I ought in some way to bestir myself to preach, to warn, to advise. But the idea of finding any sort of fault with these contented, leisurely, interested people, seemed to me absurd, and so I continued as before, half enjoying the life about me, and half bored by it. It seemed so ludicrous in any way to pity the inhabitants of the place, and yet I dimly saw that none of them could possibly continue there. But I soon saw that there was no question of advice, because I had nothing to advise. To ask them to be discontented, to suffer, to inquire, seemed as absurd as to ask a man riding comfortably in a carriage to get out and walk; and yet I felt that it was just that which they needed. But one effect the incident had; it somehow seemed to draw me more to Cynthia. There followed a time of very close companionship with her. She sought me out, she began to confide in me, chattering about her happiness and her delight in her surroundings, as a child might chatter, and half chiding me, in a tender and

pretty way, for not being more at ease in the place. "You always seem to me," she said, "as if you were only staying here, while I feel as if I could live here for ever. Of course you are very kind and patient about it all, but you are not at home—and I don't care a bit about your disapproval now." She talked to me much about Lucius, who seemed to have a great attraction for her. "He is all right," she said. "There is no nonsense about him,—we understand each other; I don't get tired of him, and we like the same things. I seem to know exactly what he feels about everything; and that is one of the comforts of this place, that no one asks questions or makes mischief; one can do just as one likes all the time. I did not think, when I was alive, that there could be anything so delightful as all this ahead of me."

"Do you never think—?" I began, but she put her hand to my lips, like a child, to stop me, and said, "No, I never think, and I never mean to think, of all the old

hateful things. I never wilfully did any harm; I only liked the people who liked me, and gave them all they asked—and now I know that I did right, though in old days serious people used to try to frighten me. God is very good to me," she went on, smiling, "to allow me to be happy in my own way."

While we talked thus, sitting on a seat that overlooked the great city—I had never seen it look so stately and beautiful, so full of all that the heart could desire—Lucius himself drew near to us, smiling, and seated himself the other side of Cynthia. "Now is not this heavenly?" she said; "to be with the two people I like best—for you are a faithful old thing, you know—and not to be afraid of anything disagreeable or tiresome happening—not to have to explain or make excuses, what could be better?"

"Yes," said Lucius, "it is happy enough," and he smiled at me in a friendly way. "The pleasantest point is that one can *wait* in this charming place. In the old days,

one was afraid of a hundred things—money, weather, illness, criticism. One had to make love in a hurry, because one missed the beautiful hour; and then there was the horror of growing old. But now if Cynthia chooses to amuse herself with other people, what do I care? She comes back as delightful as ever, and it is only so much more to be amused about. One is not even afraid of being lazy, and as for those ugly twinges of what one called conscience—which were only a sort of rheumatism after all—that is all gone too; and the delight of finding that one was right after all, and that there were really no such things as consequences!"

I became aware, as Lucius spoke thus, in all his careless beauty, of a vague trouble of soul. I seemed to foresee a kind of conflict between myself and him. He felt it too, I was aware; for he drew Cynthia to him, and said something to her; and presently they went off laughing, like a pair of children, waving a farewell to me. I

experienced a sense of desolation, knowing in my mind that all was not well, and yet feeling so powerless to contend with happiness so strong and wide.

XII

PRESENTLY I wandered off alone, and went out of the city with a sudden impulse. I thought I would go in the opposite direction to that by which I had entered it. I could see the great hills down which Cynthia and I had made our way in the dawn; but I had never gone in the further direction, where there stretched what seemed to be a great forest. The whole place lay bathed in a calm light, all unutterably beautiful. I wandered long by streams and wood-ends, every corner that I turned revealing new prospects of delight. I came at last to the edge of the forest, the mouths of little open glades running up into it, with fern and thorn-thickets. There were deer here browsing about the dingles, which let me come close to them and touch them, raising their heads from the grass, and regarding me with

gentle and fearless eyes. Birds sang softly among the boughs, and even fluttered to my shoulder, as if pleased to be noticed. So this was what was called on earth the place of torment, a place into which it seemed as if nothing of sorrow or pain could ever intrude!

Just on the edge of the wood stood a little cottage, surrounded by a quiet garden, bees humming about the flowers, the scents of which came with a homely sweetness on the air. But here I saw something which I did not at first understand. This was a group of three people, a man and a woman and a boy of about seventeen, beside the cottage porch. They had a rustic air about them, and the same sort of leisurely look that all the people of the land wore. They were all three beautiful, with a simple and appropriate kind of beauty, such as comes of a contented sojourn in the open air. But I became in a moment aware that there was a disturbing element among them. The two elders seemed to be trying to persuade

the boy, who listened smilingly enough, but half turned away from them, as though he were going away on some errand of which they did not approve. They greeted me, as I drew near, with the same cordiality as one received everywhere, and the man said, "Perhaps you can help us, sir, for we are in a trouble?" The woman joined with a murmur in the request, and I said I would gladly do what I could; while I spoke, the boy watched me earnestly, and something drew me to him, because I saw a look that seemed to tell me that he was, like myself, a stranger in the place. Then the man said, "We have lived here together very happily a long time, we three—I do not know how we came together, but so it was; and we have been more at ease than words can tell, after hard lives in the other world; and now this lad here, who has been our delight, says that he must go elsewhere and cannot stay with us; and we would persuade him if we could; and perhaps you, sir, who no doubt know what lies beyond

the fields and woods that we see, can satisfy him that it is better to remain."

While he spoke, the other two had drawn near to me, and the eyes of the woman dwelt upon the boy with a look of intent love, while the boy looked in my face anxiously and inquiringly. I could see, I found, very deep into his heart, and I saw in him a need for further experience, and a desire to go further on; and I knew at once that this could only be satisfied in one way, and that something would grow out of it both for himself and for his companions. So I said, as smilingly as I could, "I do not indeed know much of the ways of this place, but this I know, that we must go where we are sent, that no harm can befall us, and that we are never far away from those whom we love. I myself have lately been sent to visit this strange land; it seems only yesterday since I left the mountains yonder, and yet I have seen an abundance of strange and beautiful things; we must remember that here there is no

sickness or misfortune or growing old; and there is no reason, as there often seemed to be on earth, why we should fight against separation and departure. No one can, I think, be hindered here from going where he is bound. So I believe that you will let the boy go joyfully and willingly, for I am sure of this, that his journey holds not only great things for himself, but even greater things for both of you in the future. So be content and let him depart."

At this the woman said, "Yes, that is right, the stranger is right, and we must hinder the child no longer. No harm can come of it, but only good; perhaps he will return, or we may follow him, when the day comes for that."

I saw that the old man was not wholly satisfied with this. He shook his head and looked sadly on the boy; and then for a time we sat and talked of many things. One thing that the old man said surprised me very greatly. He seemed to have lived many lives, and always lives of labour; he

had grown, I gathered from his simple talk, to have a great love of the earth, the lives of flocks and herds, and of all the plants that grew out of the earth or flourished in it. I had thought before, in a foolish way, that all this might be put away from the spirit, in the land where there was no need of such things; but I saw now that there was a claim for labour, and a love of common things, which did not belong only to the body, but was a real desire of the spirit. He spoke of the pleasures of tending cattle, of cutting fagots in the forest woodland among the copses, of ploughing and sowing, with the breath of the earth about one; till I saw that the toil of the world, which I had dimly thought of as a thing which no one would do if they were not obliged, was a real instinct of the spirit, and had its counterpart beyond the body. I had supposed indeed that in a region where all troublous accidents of matter were over and done with, and where there was no need of bodily sustenance, there could be nothing

which resembled the old weary toil of the body; but now I saw gladly that this was not so, and that the primal needs of the spirit outlast the visible world. Though my own life had been spent mostly among books and things of the mind, I knew well the joys of the country-side, the blossoming of the orchard-close, the high-piled granary, the brightly-painted waggon loaded with hay, the creaking of the cider-press, the lowing of cattle in the stall, the stamping of horses in the stable, the mud-stained implements hanging in the high-roofed, cobwebbed barn. I had never known why I loved these things so well, and had invented many fancies to explain it; but now I saw that it was the natural delight in work and increase; and that the love which surrounded all these things was the sign that they were real indeed, and that in no part of life could they be put away. And then there came on me a sort of gentle laughter at the thought of how much of the religion of the world spent itself on bidding the heart turn

away from vanities, and lose itself in dreams of wonders and doctrines, and what were called higher and holier things than barns and byres and sheep-pens. Yet the truth had been staring me in the face all the time, if only I could have seen it; that the sense of constraint and unreality that fell upon one in religious matters, when some curious and intricate matter was confusedly expounded, was perfectly natural and wholesome; and that the real life of man lay in the things to which one returned, on work-a-day mornings, with such relief—the acts of life, the work of homestead, library, barrack, office, and class-room, the sight and sound of humanity, the smiles and glances and unconsidered words.

When we had sat together for a time, the boy made haste to depart. We three went with him to the edge of the wood, where a road passed up among the oaks. The three embraced and kissed and said many loving words; and then to ease the anxieties of the two, I said that I would myself set

the boy forward on his way, and see him well bestowed. They thanked me, and we went together into the wood, the two lovingly waving and beckoning, and the boy stepping blithely by my side.

I asked him whether he was not sorry to go and leave the quiet place and the pair that loved him. He smiled and said that he knew he was not leaving them at all, and that he was sure that they would soon follow; and that for himself the time had come to know more of the place. I learned from him that his last life had been an unhappy one, in a crowded street and a slovenly home, with much evil of talk and act about him; he had hated it all, he said, but for a little sister that he had loved, who had kissed and clasped him, weeping, when he lay dying of a miserable disease. He said that he thought he should find her, which made part of his joy of going; that for a long while there had come to him a sense of her remembrance and love; and that he had once sent his thought back to

earth to find her, and she was in much grief and care; and that then all these messages had at once ceased, and he knew that she had left the body. He was a merry boy, full of delight and laughter, and we went very cheerfully together through the sunlit wood, with its green glades and open spaces, which seemed all full of life and happiness, creatures living together in goodwill and comfort. I saw in this journey that all things that ever lived a conscious life in one of the innumerable worlds had a place and life of their own, and a time of refreshment like myself. What I could not discern was whether there was any interchange of lives, whether the soul of the tree could become an animal, or the animal progress to be a man. It seemed to me that it was not so, but that each had a separate life of its own. But I saw how foolish was the fancy that I had pursued in old days, that there was a central reservoir of life, into which at death all little lives were merged; I was yet to learn how

strangely all life was knit together, but now I saw that individuality was a real and separate thing, which could not be broken or lost, and that all things that had ever enjoyed a consciousness of the privilege of separate life had a true dignity and worth of existence; and that it was only the body that had made hostility necessary; that though the body could prey upon the bodies of animal and plant, yet that no soul could devour or incorporate any other soul. But as yet the merging of soul in soul through love was unseen and indeed unsuspected by me.

Now as we went in the wood, the boy and I, it came into my mind in a flash that I had seen a great secret. I had seen, I knew, very little of the great land yet—and indeed I had been but in the lowest place of all: and I thought how base and dull our ideas had been upon earth of God and His care of men. We had thought of Him dimly as sweeping into His place of torment and despair all poisoned and dis-

eased lives, all lives that had clung to the body and to the pleasures of the body, all who had sinned idly, or wilfully, or proudly; and I saw now that He used men far more wisely and lovingly than thus. Into this lowest place indeed passed all sad, and diseased, and unhappy spirits: and instead of being tormented or accursed, all was made delightful and beautiful for them there, because they needed not harsh and rough handling, but care and soft tendance. They were not to be frightened hence, or to live in fear and anguish, but to live deliciously according to their wish, and to be drawn to perceive in some quiet manner that all was not well with them; they were to have their heart's desire, and learn that it could not satisfy them; but the only thing that could draw them thence was the love of some other soul whom they must pursue and find, if they could. It was all so high and reasonable and just that I could not admire it enough. I saw that the boy was drawn thence by the love of his

little sister, who was elsewhere; and that the love and loss of the boy would presently draw the older pair to follow him and to leave the place of heart's delight. And then I began to see that Cynthia and Charmides and Lucius were being made ready, each at his own time, to leave their little pleasures and ordered lives of happiness, and to follow heavenwards in due course. Because it was made plain to me that it was the love and worship of some other soul that was the constraining force; but what the end would be I could not discern.

And now as we went through the wood, I began to feel a strange elation and joy of spirit, severe and bracing, very different from my languid and half-contented acquiescence in the place of beauty; and now the woods began to change their kind; there were fewer forest trees now, but bare heaths with patches of grey sand and scattered pines; and there began to drift across the light a grey vapour which hid the delicate hues and colours of the sunlight, and

made everything appear pale and spare. Very soon we came out on the brow of a low hill, and saw, all spread out before us, a place which, for all its dulness and darkness, had a solemn beauty of its own. There were great stone buildings very solidly made, with high chimneys which seemed to stream with smoke; we could see men, as small as ants, moving in and out of the buildings; it seemed like a place of manufacture, with a busy life of its own. But here I suddenly felt that I could go no further, but must return. I hoped that I should see the grim place again, and I desired with all my soul to go down into it, and see what eager life it was that was being lived there. And the boy, I saw, felt this too, and was impatient to proceed. So we said farewell with much tenderness, and the boy went down swiftly across the moorland, till he met some one who was coming out of the city, and conferred a little with him; and then he turned and waved his hand to me, and I waved my hand from

the brow of the hill, envying him in my heart, and went back in sorrow into the sunshine of the wood.

And as I did so I had a great joy, because I saw Amroth come suddenly running to me out of the wood, who put his arm through mine, and walked with me. Then I told him of all I had seen and thought, while he smiled and nodded and told me it was much as I imagined. "Yes," he said, "it is even so. The souls you have seen in this fine country here are just as children who are given their fill of pleasant things. Many of them have come into the state in which you see them from no fault of their own, because their souls are young and ignorant. They have shrunk from all pain and effort and tedium, like a child that does not like his lessons. There is no thought of punishment, of course. No one learns anything of punishment except a cowardly fear. We never advance until we have the will to advance, and there is nothing in mere suffering, unless we learn

to bear it gently for the sake of love. On earth it is not God but man who is cruel. There is indeed a place of sorrow, which you will see when you can bear the sight, where the self-righteous and the harsh go for a time, and all those who have made others suffer because they believed in their own justice and insight. You will find there all tyrants and conquerors, and many rich men, who used their wealth heedlessly; and even so you will be surprised when you see it. But those spirits are the hardest of all to help, because they have loved nothing but their own virtue or their own ambition; yet you will see how they too are drawn thence; and now that you have had a sight of the better country, tell me how you liked it."

"Why," I said, "it is plain and austere enough; but I felt a great quickening of spirit, and a desire to join in the labours of the place."

Amroth smiled, and said, "You will have little share in that. You will find your

task, no doubt, when you are strong enough; and now you must go back and make unwilling holiday with your pleasant friends. You have not much longer to stay there; and surely"—he laughed as he spoke—"you can endure a little more of those pretty concerts and charming talk of art and its values and pulsations!"

"I can endure it," I said, laughing, "for it does me good to see you and to hear you; but tell me, Amroth, what have you been about all this time? Have you had a thought of me?"

"Yes, indeed," said Amroth, laughing. "I don't forget you, and I love your company; but I am a busy man myself, and have something pleasanter to do than to attend these elegant receptions of yours—at which, indeed, I have sometimes thought you out of place."

As we thus talked we came to the forest lodge. The old pair came running out to greet me, and I told them that the boy was well bestowed. I could see in the woman's

face that she would soon follow him, and even the old man had a look that I had not seen in him before; and here Amroth left me, and I returned to the city, where all was as peaceable as before.

XIII

But when I saw Cynthia, as I presently did, she too was in a different mood. She had positively missed me, and told me so with many endearments. I was not to remain away so long. I was useful to her. Charmides had become tiresome and lost in thought, but Lucius was as sweet as ever. Some new-comers had arrived, all pleasant enough. She asked me where I had been, and I told her all the story. "Yes, that is beautiful enough," she said, "but I hate all this breaking up and going on. I am sure I do not wish for any change." She made a grimace of disgust at the idea of the ugly town I had seen, and then she said that she would go with me some time to look at it, because it would make her happier to return to her peace; and then she went off to tell Lucius.

I soon found Charmides, and I told him my adventures. "That is a curious story," he said. "I like to think of people caring for each other so; that is picturesque! These simple emotions are interesting. And one likes to think that people who have none of the finer tastes should have something to fall back upon—something hot and strong, as we used to say."

"But," I said, "tell me this, Charmides, was there never any one in the old days whom you cared for like that?"

"I thought so often enough," said he, a little peevishly, "but you do not know how much a man like myself is at the mercy of little things! An ugly hand, a broken tooth, a fallen cheek . . . it seems little enough, but one has a sort of standard. I had a microscopic eye, you know, and a little blemish was a serious thing to me. I was always in search of something that I could not find; then there were awkward strains in the characters of people—they were mean or greedy or selfish, and all my

pleasure was suddenly dashed. I am speaking," he went on, "with a strange candour! I don't defend it or excuse it, but there it was. I did once, as a child, I believe, care for one person—an old nurse of mine—in the right way. Dear, how good she was to me! I remember once how she came all the way, after she had left us, to see me on my way through town. She just met me at a railway station, and she had bought a little book which she thought might amuse me, and a bag of oranges—she remembered that I used to like oranges. I recollect at the time thinking it was all very touching and devoted; but I was with a friend of mine, and had not time to say much. I can see her old face, smiling, with tears in her eyes, as we went off. I gave the book and the oranges away, I remember, to a child at the next station. It is curious how it all comes back to me now; I never saw her again, and I wish I had behaved better. I should like to see her again, and to tell her that I really cared! I wonder if that

is possible? But there is really so much to do here and to enjoy; and there is no one to tell me where to go, so that I am puzzled. What is one to do?"

"I think that if one desires a thing enough here, Charmides," I said, "one is in a fair way to obtain it. Never mind! a door will be opened. But one has got to care, I suppose; it is not enough to look upon it as a pretty effect, which one would just like to put in its place with other effects—'Open, sesame'—do you remember? There is a charm at which all doors fly open, even here!"

"I will talk to you more about this," said Charmides, "when I have had time to arrange my thoughts a little. Who would have supposed that an old recollection like that would have disturbed me so much? It would make a good subject for a picture or a song."

XIV

It was on one of these days that Amroth came suddenly upon me, with a very mirthful look on his face, his eyes sparkling like a man struggling with hidden laughter. "Come with me," he said; "you have been so dutiful lately that I am alarmed for your health." Then we went out of the garden where I was sitting, and we were suddenly in a street. I saw in a moment that it was a real street, in the suburb of an English town; there were electric trams running, and rows of small trees, and an open space planted with shrubs, with asphalt paths and ugly seats. On the other side of the road was a row of big villas, tasteless, dreary, comfortable houses, with meaningless turrets and balconies. I could not help feeling that it was very dismal that men and women should live in such

places, think them neat and well-appointed, and even grow to love them. We went into one of these houses; it was early in the morning, and a little drizzle was falling, which made the whole place seem very cheerless. In a room with a bow-window looking on the road there were three persons. An old man was reading a paper in an arm-chair by the fire, with his back to the light. He looked a nice old man, with his clear skin and white hair; opposite him was an old lady in another chair, reading a letter. With his back to the fire stood a man of about thirty-five, sturdy-looking, but pale, and with an appearance of being somewhat overworked. He had a good face, but seemed a little uninteresting, as if he did not feed his mind. The table had been spread for breakfast, and the meal was finished and partly cleared away. The room was ugly and the furniture was a little shabby; there was a glazed bookcase, full of dull-looking books, a sideboard, a table with writing materials in the window, and

some engravings of royal groups and celebrated men.

The younger man, after a moment, said, "Well, I must be off." He nodded to his father, and bent down to kiss his mother, saying, "Take care of yourself—I shall be back in good time for tea." I had a sense that he was using these phrases in a mechanical way, and that they were customary with him. Then he went out, planting his feet solidly on the carpet, and presently the front door shut. I could not understand why we had come to this very unemphatic party, and examined the whole room carefully to see what was the object of our visit. A maid came in and removed the rest of the breakfast things, leaving the cloth still on the table, and some of the spoons and knives, with the salt-cellars, in their places. When she had finished and gone out, there was a silence, only broken by the crackling of the paper as the old man folded it. Presently the old lady said: "I wish Charles could get his holiday a

little sooner; he looks so tired, and he does not eat well. He does stick so hard to his business."

"Yes, dear, he does," said the old man, "but it is just the busiest time, and he tells me that they have had some large orders lately. They are doing very well, I understand."

There was another silence, and then the old lady put down her letter, and looked for a moment at a picture, representing a boy, a large photograph a good deal faded, which hung close to her—underneath it was a small vase of flowers on a bracket. She gave a little sigh as she did this, and the old man looked at her over the top of his paper. "Just think, father," she said, "that Harry would have been thirty-eight this very week!"

The old man made a comforting sort of little noise, half sympathetic and half deprecatory. "Yes, I know," said the old lady, "but I can't help thinking about him a great deal at this time of the year. I

don't understand why he was taken away from us. He was always such a good boy —he would have been just like Charles, only handsomer—he was always handsomer and brighter; he had so much of your spirit! Not but what Charles has been the best of sons to us—I don't mean that—no one could be better or more easy to please! But Harry had a different way with him." Her eyes filled with tears, which she brushed away. "No," she added, "I won't fret about him. I daresay he is happier where he is—I am sure he is—and thinking of his mother too, my bonny boy, perhaps."

The old man got up, put his paper down, went across to the old lady, and gave her a kiss on the brow. "There, there," he said soothingly, "we may be sure it 's all for the best;" and he stood looking down fondly at her. Amroth crossed the room and stood beside the pair, with a hand on the shoulder of each. I saw in an instant that there was an unmistakable likeness between the three; but the contrast of the marvellous

brilliance and beauty of Amroth with the old, world-wearied, simple-minded couple was the most extraordinary thing to behold. "Yes, I feel better already," said the old lady, smiling; "it always does me good to say out what I am feeling, father; and then you are sure to understand."

The mist closed suddenly in upon the scene, and we were back in a moment in the garden with its porticoes, in the radiant, untroubled air. Amroth looked at me with a smile that was full, half of gaiety and half of tenderness. "There," he said, "what do you think of that? If all had gone well with me, as they say on earth, that is where I should be now, going down to the city with Charles. That is the prospect which to the dear old people seems so satisfactory compared with this! In that house I lay ill for some weeks, and from there my body was carried out. And they would have kept me there if they could—and I myself did not want to go. I was afraid. Oh, how I envied Charles going

down to the city and coming back for tea, to read the magazines aloud or play backgammon. I am afraid I was not as nice as I should have been about all that—the evenings were certainly dull!"

"But what do you feel about it now?" I said. "Don't you feel sorry for the muddle and ignorance and pathos of it all? Can't something be done to show everybody what a ghastly mistake it is, to get so tied down to the earth and the things of earth?"

"A mistake?" said Amroth. "There is no such thing as a mistake. One cannot sorrow for their grief, any more than one can sorrow for the child who cries out in the tunnel and clasps his mother's hand. Don't you see that their grief and loss is the one beautiful thing in those lives, and all that it is doing for them, drawing them hither? Why, that is where we grow and become strong, in the hopeless suffering of love. I am glad and content that my own stay was made so brief. I wish it could be shortened for the three—and yet I do not,

because they will gain so wonderfully by it. They are mounting fast; it is their very ignorance that teaches them. Not to know, not to perceive, but to be forced to believe in love, that is the point."

"Yes," I said, "I see that; but what about the lives that are broken and poisoned by grief, in a stupor of pain—or the souls that do not feel it at all, except as a passing shadow—what about them?"

"Oh," said Amroth lightly, "the sadder the dream the more blessed the awakening; and as for those who cannot feel—well, it will all come to them, as they grow older."

"Yes," I said, "it has done me good to see all this—it makes many things plain; but can you bear to leave them thus?"

"Leave them!" said Amroth. "Who knows but that I shall be sent to help them away, and carry them, as I carried you, to the crystal sea of peace? The darling mother, I shall be there at her awakening. They are old spirits, those two, old and

wise; and there is a high place prepared for them."

"But what about Charles?" I said.

Amroth smiled. "Old Charles?" he said. "I must admit that he is not a very stirring figure at present. He is much immersed in his game of finance, and talks a great deal in his lighter moments about the commercial prospects of the Empire and the need of retaliatory tariffs. But he will outgrow all that! He is a very loyal soul, but not very adventurous just now. He would be sadly discomposed by an affection which came in between him and his figures. He would think he wanted a change—and he will have a thorough one, the good old fellow, one of these days. But he has a long journey before him."

"Well," I said, "there are some surprises here! I am afraid I am very youthful yet."

"Yes, dear child, you are very ingenuous," said Amroth, "and that is a great part of your charm. But we will find something for you to do before long! But here

comes Charmides, to talk about the need of exquisite pulsations, and their symbolism—though I see a change in him too. And now I must go back to business. Take care of yourself, and I will be back to tea." And Amroth flashed away in a very cheerful mood.

XV

THERE were many things at that time that were full of mystery, things which I never came to understand. There was in particular a certain sort of people, whom one met occasionally, for whom I could never wholly account. They were unlike others in this fact, that they never appeared to belong to any particular place or community. They were both men and women, who seemed—I can express it in no other way—to be in the possession of a secret so great that it made everything else trivial and indifferent to them. Not that they were impatient or contemptuous—it was quite the other way; but to use a similitude, they were like good-natured, active, kindly elders at a children's party. They did not shun conversation, but if one talked with them, they used a kind of tender and gentle irony,

which had something admiring and complimentary about it, which took away any sense of vexation or of baffled curiosity. It was simply as though their concern lay elsewhere; they joined in anything with a frank delight, not with any touch of condescension. They were even more kindly and affectionate than others, because they did not seem to have any small problems of their own, and could give their whole attention and thought to the person they were with. These inscrutable people puzzled me very much. I asked Amroth about them once.

"Who are these people," I said, "whom one sometimes meets, who are so far removed from all of us? What are they doing here?"

Amroth smiled. "So you have detected them!" he said. "You are quite right, and it does your observation credit. But you must find it out for yourself. I cannot explain, and if I could, you would not understand me yet."

"Then I am not mistaken," I said, "but I wish you would give me a hint—they seem to know something more worth knowing than all beside."

"Exactly," said Amroth. "You are very near the truth; it is staring you in the face; but it would spoil all if I told you. There is plenty about them in the old books you used to read—they have the secret of joy." And that is all that he would say.

It was on a solitary ramble one day, outside of the place of delight, that I came nearer to one of these people than I ever did at any other time. I had wandered off into a pleasant place of grassy glades with little thorn-thickets everywhere. I went up a small eminence, which commanded a view of the beautiful plain with its blue distance and the enamelled green foreground of close-grown coverts. There I sat for a long time lost in pleasant thought and wonder, when I saw a man drawing near, walking slowly and looking about him with a serene and delighted air. He passed not far from

me, and observing me, waved a hand of welcome, came up the slope, and greeting me in a friendly and open manner, asked if he might sit with me for a little.

"This is a pleasant place," he said, "and you seem very agreeably occupied."

"Yes," I said, looking into his smiling face, "one has no engagements here, and no need of business to fill the time—but indeed I am not sure that I am busy enough." As I spoke I was regarding him with some curiosity. He was a man of mature age, with a strong, firm-featured face, healthy and sunburnt of aspect, and he was dressed, not as I was for ease and repose, but with the garments of a traveller. His hat, which was large and of some soft grey cloth, was pushed to his back, and hung there by a cord round his neck. His hair was a little grizzled, and lay close-curled to his head; in his strong and muscular hand he carried a stick. He smiled again at my words, and said:

"Oh, one need not trouble about being

busy until the time comes; that is a feeling one inherits from the life of earth, and I am sure you have not left it long. You have a very fresh air about you, as if you had rested, and rested well."

"Yes, I have rested," I said; "but though I am content enough, there is something unquiet in me, I am afraid!"

"Ah!" he said, "there is that in all of us, and it would not be well with us if there were not. Will you tell me a little about yourself? That is one of the pleasures of this life here, that we have no need to be cautious, or to fear that we shall give ourselves away."

I told him my adventures, and he listened with serious attention.

"Ah, that is all very good," he said at last, "but you must not be in any hurry; it is a great thing that ideas should dawn upon us gradually—one gets the full truth of them so. It was the hurry of life which was so bewildering—the shocks, the surprises, the ugly reflections of one's conduct

that one saw in other lives—the corners one had to turn. Things, indeed, come suddenly even here, but one is led up to them gently enough; allowed to enter the sea for oneself, not soused and ducked in it. You will need all the strength you can store up for what is before you, and I can see in your face that you are storing up strength—but the weariness is not quite gone out of your mind."

He was silent for a little, musing, till I said, "Will you not tell me some of your own adventures? I am sure from your look that you have them; and you are a pilgrim, it seems. Where are you bound?"

"Oh," he said lightly, "I am not one of the people who have adventures—just the journey and the talk beside the way."

"But," I said, "I have seen some others like you, and I am puzzled about it. You seem, if I may say so—I do not mean anything disrespectful or impertinent—to be like the gipsies whom one meets in quiet country places, with a secret knowledge of

their own, a pride too great to be worth expressing, not anxious about life, not weary or dissatisfied, caring not for localities or possessions, but with a sort of eager pleasure in freedom and movement."

He laughed. "Yes," he said, "you are right! I am no doubt a sort of nomad, as you say, detached from life perhaps. I don't know that it is desirable; there is a great deal to be said for living in the same place and loving the same things. Most people are happier so, and learn what they have to learn in that manner."

"Yes," I said, "that is true and beautiful—the same old house, the same trees and pastures, the stream and the water-plants that hide it, the blue hills beyond the nearer wood—the dear familiar things; but even so the road which passes through the fields, over the bridge, up the covert-side . . . it leads somewhere, and the heart on sunny days leaps up to follow it! Talking with you here, I feel a hunger for something wider and more free; your voice has the

sound of the wind, with the secret knowledge of strange hill-tops and solitary seas! Sometimes the heart settles down upon what it knows and loves, but sometimes it reaches out to all the love and beauty hidden in the world, and in the waters beyond the world, and would embrace it all if it could. The faces one sees as one passes through unfamiliar cities or villages, how one longs to talk, to question, to ask what gave them the look they wear. . . . And you, if I may say it, seem to have passed beyond the need of wanting or desiring anything . . . but I must not talk thus to a stranger; you must forgive me."

"Forgive you?" said the stranger; "that is only an earthly phrase—the old terror of indiscretion and caution. What are we here for but to get acquainted with one another—to let our inmost thoughts talk together? In the world we are bounded by time and space, and we have the terror of each other's glances and exteriors to contend with. We make friends on earth in

spite of our limitations; but in heaven we get to know each other's hearts; and that blessing goes back with us to the dim fields and narrow houses of the earth. I see plainly enough that you are not perfectly happy; but one can only win content through discontent. Where you are now, you are not in accord with the souls about you. Never mind that! There are beautiful spirits within reach of your hand and heart; a little clouded by mistaking the quality of joy, no doubt, but great and everlasting for all that. You must try to draw near to them, and find spirits to love. Do you not remember in the days of earth how one felt sometimes in an unfamiliar place —among a gathering of strangers—at church perhaps, or at some school which one visited, where one saw the young faces, which showed so clearly, before the world had stamped itself in frowns and heaviness upon them, the quality of the soul within? Don't you remember the feeling at such times of how many there were in the world

whom one might love, if one had leisure and opportunity and energy? Well, there is no need to resist that, or to deplore it here; one may go where one's will inclines one, and speak as one's heart tells one to speak. I think you are perhaps too conscious of waiting for something. Your task lies ahead of you, but the work of love can begin at once and anywhere."

"Yes," I said, "I feel that now and here. Will you not tell me something of yourself in return? I cannot read your mind clearly —it is occupied with something I cannot grasp—what is your work in heaven?"

"Oh," he said lightly, "that is easy enough, and yet you would not understand it. I have been led through the shadow of fear, and I have passed out on the other side. And my duty is to release others from fear, as far as I can. It is the darkest shadow of all, because it dwells in the unknown. Pain, without it, is no suffering at all; indeed pain is almost a pleasure, when one knows what it is doing for one.

But fear is the doubt whether pain or suffering are really helping us; and just as memory never has any touch of fear about it, so hope may likewise have done with fear."

"But how did you learn this?" I said.

"Only by fearing to the uttermost," he replied. "The power—it is not courage, because that only defies fear—cannot be given one; it must be painfully won. You remember the blessing of the pure in heart, that they shall see God? There would be little hope in that promise for the soul that knew itself to be impure, if it were not for the other side of it—that the vision of God, which is the most terrible of all things, can give purity to the most sin-stained soul. In that vision, all desire and all fear have an end, because there is nothing left either to desire or to dread. That vision we may delay or hasten. We may delay it, if we allow our prudence, or our shame, or our comfort, to get in the way: we may hasten it, if we cast ourselves at every moment of

our pilgrimage upon the mercy and the love of God. His one desire is that we should be satisfied; and if He seems to put obstacles in our way, to keep us waiting, to permit us to be miserable, that is only that we may learn to cast ourselves into love and service—which is the one way to His heart. But now I must be going, for I have said all that you can bear. Will you remember this—not to reserve yourself, not to think others unworthy or hostile, but to cast your love and trust freely and lavishly, everywhere and anywhere? We must gather nothing, hold on to nothing, just give ourselves away at every moment, flowing like the stream into every channel that is open, withholding nothing, retaining nothing. I see," he added, "very great and beautiful things ahead of you, and very sad and painful things as well. But you are close to the light, and it is breaking all about you with a splendour which you cannot guess."

He rose up, he took my hand in his own

and laid the other on my brow, and I felt his heart go out to mine and gather me to him, as a child is gathered to a father's arms. And then he went silently and lightly upon his way.

XVI

THE time moved on quietly enough in the land of delight. I made acquaintance with quite a number of the soft-voiced contented folk. Sometimes it interested me to see the change coming upon one or another, a wonder or a desire that made them sit withdrawn and abstracted, and breaking with a sort of effort out of the dreamful mood. Then they would leave us, sometimes quite suddenly, sometimes with courteous adieus. New-comers, too, kept arriving, to be made pleasantly at home. I found myself seeing more of Cynthia. She was much with Lucius, and they seemed as gay as ever, but I saw that she was sometimes puzzled. She said to me one day as we sat together, "I wish you would tell me what this is all about? I do not want to change it, and I am very happy, but is n't it all rather

pointless? I believe you have some secret you are keeping from me." She was sitting close beside me, like a child, resting her head on my arm, and she took my hand in both of hers.

"No," I said, "I am keeping nothing from you, pretty child! I could not explain to you what is in my mind, and it would spoil your pleasure if I could. It is all right, and you will see in good time."

"I hate to be put off like that," she said. "You are not really interested in me; and you do not trust me; you do not care about the things I care about, and if you are so superior, you ought to explain to me why."

"Well," I said, "I will try to explain. Do you ever remember having been very happy in a place, and having been obliged to leave it, always hoping to return; and then when you did return, finding that, though nothing was changed, you were yourself changed, and could not, even if you would, have taken up the old life again?"

"Yes," said Cynthia, musing, "I remem-

ber that sort of thing happening once, about a house where I stayed as a child. It seemed so stupid and dull when I went back that I wondered how I could ever have really liked it."

"Well," I said, "it is the same sort of thing here. I am only here for a time, and though I do not know where I am going or when, I think I shall not be here much longer."

At this Cynthia did what she had never done before—she kissed me. Then she said, "Don't speak of such disagreeable things. I could not get on without you. You are so convenient, like a comfortable old arm-chair."

"What a compliment!" I said. "But you see that you don't like my explanation. Why trouble about it? You have plenty of time. Is Lucius like an arm-chair, too?"

"No," she said, "he is exciting, like a new necklace—and Charmides, he is exciting too, in a way, but rather too fine for me, like a ball-dress!"

"Yes," I said, "I noticed that your own taste in dress is different of late. This is a much simpler thing than what you came in."

"Oh, yes," she said, "it does n't seem worth while to dress up now. I have made my friends, and I suppose I am getting lazy."

We said little more, but she did not seem inclined to leave me, and was more with me for a time. I actually heard her tell Lucius once that she was tired, at which he laughed, not very pleasantly, and went away.

But my own summons came to me so unexpectedly that I had but little time to make my farewell.

I was sitting once in a garden-close watching a curious act proceeding, which I did not quite understand. It looked like a religious ceremony; a man in embroidered robes was being conducted by some boys in white dresses through the long cloister, carrying something carefully wrapped up in

his arms, and I heard what sounded like an antique hymn of a fine stiff melody, rapidly sung.

There had been nothing quite like this before, and I suddenly became aware that Amroth was beside me, and that he had a look of anger in his face. "You had better not look at this," he said to me; "it might not be very helpful, as they say."

"Am I to come with you?" I said. "That is well—but I should like to say a word to one or two of my friends here."

"No, not a word!" said Amroth quickly. He looked at me with a curious look, in which he seemed to be measuring my strength and courage. "Yes, that will do!" he added. "Come at once—don't be surprised—it will be different from what you expect."

He took me by the arm, and we hurried from the place; one or two of the people who stood by looked at us in lazy wonder. We walked in silence down a long alley, to a great gate that I had often passed in

my strolls. It was a barred iron gate, of a very stately air, with high stone gate-posts. I had never been able to find my outward way to this, and there was a view from it of enchanting beauty, blue distant woods and rolling slopes. Amroth came quickly to the gate, seemed to unlock it, and held it open for me to pass. "One word," he said with his most beautiful smile, his eyes flashing and kindling with some secret emotion, "whatever happens, do not be *afraid!* There is nothing whatever to fear, only be prepared and wait." He motioned me through, and I heard him close the gate behind me.

XVII

I WAS alone in an instant, and in terrible pain—pain not in any part of me, but all around and within me. A cold wind of a piercing bitterness seemed to blow upon me; but with it came a sense of immense energy and strength, so that the pain became suddenly delightful, like the stretching of a stiffened limb. I cannot put the pain into exact words. It was not attended by any horror; it seemed a sense of infinite grief and loss and loneliness, a deep yearning to be delivered and made free. I felt suddenly as though everything I loved had gone from me, irretrievably gone and lost. I looked round me, and I could discern through a mist the bases of some black and sinister rocks, that towered up intolerably above me; in between them were channels full of stones and drifted snow. Anything more

stupendous than those black-ribbed crags, those toppling precipices, I had never seen. The wind howled among them, and sometimes there was a noise of rocks cast down. I knew in some obscure way that my path lay there, and my heart absolutely failed me. Instead of going straight to the rocks, I began to creep along the base to see whether I could find some easier track. Suddenly the voice of Amroth said, rather sharply, in my ear, "Don't be silly!" This homely direction, so peremptorily made, had an instantaneous effect. If he had said, "Be not faithless," or anything in the copybook manner, I should have sat down and resigned myself to solemn despair. But now I felt a fool and a coward as well.

So I addressed myself, like a dog who hears the crack of a whip, to the rocks.

It would be tedious to relate how I clambered and stumbled and agonised. There did not seem to me the slightest use in making the attempt, or the smallest

hope of reaching the top, or the least expectation of finding anything worth finding. I hated everything I had ever seen or known; recollections of old lives and of the quiet garden I had left came upon me with a sort of mental nausea. This was very different from the amiable and easy-going treatment I had expected. Yet I did struggle on, with a hideous faintness and weariness—but would it never stop? It seemed like years to me, my hands frozen and wetted by snow and dripping water, my feet bruised and wounded by sharp stones, my garments strangely torn and rent, with stains of blood showing through in places. Still the hideous business continued, but progress was never quite impossible. At one place I found the rocks wholly impassable, and choosing the broader of two ledges which ran left and right, I worked out along the cliff, only to find that the ledge ran into the precipices, and I had to retrace my steps, if the shuffling motions I made could be so called.

Then I took the harder of the two, which zigzagged backwards and forwards across the rocks. At one place I saw a thing which moved me very strangely. This was a heap of bones, green, slimy, and ill-smelling, with some tattered rags of cloth about them, which lay in a heap beneath a precipice. The thought that a man could fall and be killed in such a place moved me with a fresh misery. What that meant I could not tell. Were we not away from such things as mouldering flesh and broken bones? It seemed not; and I climbed madly away from them. Quite suddenly I came to the top, a bleak platform of rock, where I fell prostrate on my face and groaned.

"Yes, that was an ugly business," said the voice of Amroth beside me, "but you got through it fairly well. How do you feel?"

"I call it a perfect outrage," I said. "What is the meaning of this hateful business?"

"The meaning?" said Amroth; "never

mind about the meaning. The point is that you are here!"

"Oh," I said, "I have had a horrible time. All my sense of security is gone from me. Is one indeed liable to this kind of interruption, Amroth?"

"Of course," said Amroth, "there must be some tests; but you will be better very soon. It is all over for the present, I may tell you, and you will soon be able to enjoy it. There is no terror in past suffering—it is the purest joy."

"Yes, I used to say so and think so," I said, closing my eyes. "But this was different—it was horrible! And the time it lasted, and the despair of it! It seems to have soaked into my whole life and poisoned it."

Amroth said nothing for a minute, but watched me closely.

Presently I went on. "And tell me one thing. There was a ghastly thing I saw, some mouldering bones on a ledge. Can people indeed fall and die there?"

"Perhaps it was only a phantom," said Amroth, "put there like the sights in the *Pilgrim's Progress,* the fire that was fed secretly with oil, and the robin with his mouth full of spiders, as an encouragement for wayfarers!"

"But that," I said, "would be too horrible for anything—to turn the terrors of death into a sort of conjuring trick—a dramatic entertainment, to make one's flesh creep! Why, that was the misery of some of the religion taught us in old days, that it seemed often only dramatic—a scene without cause or motive, just displayed to show us the anger or the mercy of God, so that one had the miserable sense that much of it was a spectacular affair, that He Himself did not really suffer or feel indignation, but thought it well to feign emotions, like a schoolmaster to impress his pupils—and that people too were not punished for their own sakes, to help them, but just to startle or convince others."

"Yes," said Amroth, "I was only jesting,

and I see that my jests were out of place. Of course what you saw was real—there are no pretences here. Men and women do indeed suffer a kind of death—the second death—in these places, and have to begin again; but that is only for a certain sort of self-confident and sin-soaked person, whose will needs to be roughly broken. There are certain perverse sins of the spirit which need a spiritual death, as the sins of the body need a bodily death. Only thus can one be born again."

"Well," I said, "I am amazed—but now what am I to do? I am fit for nothing, and I shall be fit for nothing hereafter."

"If you talk like this," said Amroth, "you will only drive me away. There are certain things that it is better not to confess to one's dearest friend, not even to God. One must just be silent about them, try to forget them, hope they can never happen again. I tell you, you will soon be all right; and if you are not you will have to see a physician. But you

had better not do that unless you are obliged."

This made me feel ashamed of myself, and the shame took off my thoughts from what I had endured; but I could do nothing but lie aching and panting on the rocks for a long time, while Amroth sat beside me in silence.

"Are you vexed?" I said after a long pause.

"No, no, not vexed," said Amroth, "but I am not sure whether I have not made a mistake. It was I who urged that you might go forward, and I confess I am disappointed at the result. You are softer than I thought."

"Indeed I am not," I said. "I will go down the rocks and come up again, if that will satisfy you."

"Come, that is a little better," said Amroth, "and I will tell you now that you did well—better indeed at the time than I expected. You did the thing in very good time, as we used to say."

By this time I felt very drowsy, and suddenly dropped off into a sleep—such a deep and dreamless sleep, to descend into which was like flinging oneself into a river-pool by a bubbling weir on a hot and dusty day of summer.

I awoke suddenly with a pressure on my arm, and, waking up with a sense of renewed freshness, I saw Amroth looking at me anxiously. "Do not say anything," he said. "Can you manage to hobble a few steps? If you cannot, I will get some help, and we shall be all right—but there may be an unpleasant encounter, and it is best avoided." I scrambled to my feet, and Amroth helped me a little higher up the rocks, looking carefully into the mist as he did so. Close behind us was a steep rock with ledges. Amroth flung himself upon them, with an agile scramble or two. Then he held his hand down, lying on the top; I took it, and, stiffened as I was, I contrived to get up beside him. "That is right," he said in a whisper. "Now lie

here quietly, don't speak a word, and just watch."

I lay, with a sense of something evil about. Presently I heard the sound of voices in the mist to the left of us; and in an instant there loomed out of the mist the form of a man, who was immediately followed by three others. They were different from all the other spirits I had yet seen—tall, lean, dark men, very spare and strong. They looked carefully about them, mostly glancing down the cliff, and sometimes conferred together. They were dressed in close-fitting dark clothes, which seemed as if made out of some kind of skin or untanned leather, and their whole air was sinister and terrifying. They passed quite close beneath us, so that I saw the bald head of one of them, who carried a sort of hook in his hands.

When they got to the place where my climb had ended, they stopped and examined the stones carefully: one of them clambered a few feet down the cliff. Then

he came back and seemed to make a brief report, after which they appeared undecided what to do; they even looked up at the rock where we lay; but while they did this, another man, very similar, came hurriedly out of the mist, said something to the group, and they all disappeared very quickly into the darkness the same way they had come. Then there was a silence. I should have spoken, but Amroth put a finger on his lips. Presently there came a sound of falling stones, and after that there broke out among the rocks below a horrible crying, as of a man in sore straits and instant fear. Amroth jumped quickly to his feet. "This will not do," he said. "Stay here for me." And then leaping down the rock, he disappeared, shouting words of help—"Hold on —I am coming."

He came back some little time afterwards, and I saw that he was not alone. He had with him an old stumbling man, evidently in the last extremity of terror and pain, with beads of sweat on his brow and blood

running down from his hands. He seemed dazed and bewildered. And Amroth too looked ruffled and almost weary, as I had never seen him look. I came down the rock to meet them. But Amroth said, "Wait here for me; it has been a troublesome business, and I must go and bestow this poor creature in a place of safety—I will return." He led the old man away among the rocks, and I waited a long time, wondering very heavily what it was that I had seen.

When Amroth came back to the rock he was fresh and smiling again: he swung himself up, and sat by me, with his hands clasped round his knees. Then he looked at me, and said, "I daresay you are surprised? You did not expect to see such terrors and dangers here? And it is a great mystery."

"You must be kind," I said, "and explain to me what has happened."

"Well," said Amroth, "there is a large gang of men who infest this place, who

have got up here by their agility, and can go no further, who make it their business to prevent all they can from coming up. I confess that it is the hardest thing of all to understand why it is allowed; but if you expect all to be plain sailing up here, you are mistaken. One needs to be wary and strong. They do much harm here, and will continue to do it."

"What would have happened if they had found us here?" I said.

"Nothing very much," said Amroth; "a good deal of talk no doubt, and some blows perhaps. But it was well I was with you, because I could have summoned help. They are not as strong as they look either—it is mostly fear that aids them."

"Well, but *who* are they?" I said.

"They are the most troublesome crew of all," said Amroth, "and come nearest to the old idea of fiends—they are indeed the origin of that notion. To speak plainly, they are men who have lived virtuous lives,

and have done cruel things from good motives. There are some kings and statesmen among them, but they are mostly priests and schoolmasters, I imagine—people with high ideals, of course! But they are not replenished so fast as they used to be, I think. Their difficulty is that they can never see that they are wrong. Their notion is that this is a bad place to come to, and that people are better left in ignorance and bliss, obedient and submissive. A good many of them have given up the old rough methods, and hang about the base of the cliff, dissuading souls from climbing: they do the most harm of all, because if one does turn back here, it is long before one may make a new attempt. But enough of this," he added; "it makes me sick to think of them—the old fellow you saw with me had an awful fright—he was nearly done as it was! But I see you are feeling stronger, and I think we had better be going. One does not stay here by choice, though the place has a beauty of its own.

And now you will have an easier time for awhile."

We descended from our rock, and Amroth led the way, through a long cleft, with rocks, very rough and black, on either side, and fallen fragments under foot. It was steep at first; but soon the rocks grew lower; and we came out presently on to a great desolate plain, with stones lying thickly about, among a coarse kind of grass. At each step I seemed to grow stronger, and walked more lightly, and in the thin fine air my horrors left me, though I still had a dumb sense of suffering which, strange to say, I found it almost pleasant to resist. And so we walked for a time in friendly silence, Amroth occasionally indicating the way. The hill began to slope downwards very slowly, and the wind to subside. The mist drew off little by little, till at last I saw ahead of us a great bare-looking fortress with high walls and little windows, and a great blank tower over all.

XVIII

We were received at the guarded door of the fortress by a porter, who seemed to be well acquainted with Amroth. Within, it was a big, bare place, with stone-arched cloisters and corridors, more like a monastery than a castle. Amroth led me briskly along the passages, and took me into a large room very sparely furnished, where an elderly man sat writing at a table with his back to the light. He rose when we entered, and I had a sudden sense that I was coming to school again, as indeed I was. Amroth greeted him with a mixture of freedom and respect, as a well-loved pupil might treat an old schoolmaster. The man himself was tall and upright, and serious-looking, but for a twinkle of humour that lurked in his eye; yet I felt he was one who expected to be obeyed. He took Amroth

into the embrasure of a window, and talked with him in low tones. Then he came back to me and asked me a few questions of which I did not then understand the drift —but it seemed a kind of very informal examination. Then he made us a little bow of dismissal, and sat down at once to his writing without giving us another look. Amroth took me out, and led me up many stone stairs, along whitewashed passages, with narrow windows looking out on the plain, to a small cell or room near the top of the castle. It was very austerely furnished, but it had a little door which took us out on the leads, and I then saw what a very large place the fortress was, consisting of several courts with a great central tower.

"Where on earth have we got to now?" I said.

"Nowhere *'on earth,'*" said Amroth. "You are at school again, and you will find it very interesting, I hope and expect, but it will be hard work. I will tell you plainly that you are lucky to be here, be-

cause if you do well, you will have the best sort of work to do."

"But what am I to do, and where am I to go?" I said. "I feel like a new boy, with all sorts of dreadful rules in the background."

"That will all be explained to you," said Amroth. "And now good-bye for the present. Let me hear a good report of you," he added, with a parental air, "when I come again. What would not we older fellows give to be back here!" he added with a half-mocking smile. "Let me tell you, my boy, you have got the happiest time of your life ahead of you. Well, be a credit to your friends!"

He gave me a nod and was gone. I stood for a little looking out rather desolately into the plain. There came a brisk tap at my door, and a man entered. He greeted me pleasantly, gave me a few directions, and I gathered that he was one of the instructors. "You will find it hard work," he said; "we do not waste time here.

But I gather that you have had rather a troublesome ascent, so you can rest a little. When you are required, you will be summoned."

When he left me, I still felt very weary, and lay down on a little couch in the room, falling presently asleep. I was roused by the entry of a young man, who said he had been sent to fetch me: we went down along the passages, while he talked pleasantly in low tones about the arrangements of the place. As we went along the passages, the doors of the cells kept opening, and we were joined by young men and women, who spoke to me or to each other, but all in the same subdued voices, till at last we entered a big, bare, arched room, lit by high windows, with rows of seats, and a great desk or pulpit at the end. I looked round me in great curiosity. There must have been several hundred people present, sitting in rows. There was a murmur of talk over the hall, till a bell suddenly sounded somewhere in the castle, a door opened, a man stepped

quickly into the pulpit, and began to speak in a very clear and distinct tone.

The discourse—and all the other discourses to which I listened in the place—was of a psychological kind, dealing entirely with the relations of human beings with each other, and the effect and interplay of emotions. It was extremely scientific, but couched in the simplest phraseology, and made many things clear to me which had formerly been obscure. There is nothing in the world so bewildering as the selective instinct of humanity, the reasons which draw people to each other, the attractive power of similarity and dissimilarity, the effects of class and caste, the abrupt approaches of passion, the influence of the body on the soul and of the soul on the body. It came upon me with a shock of surprise that while these things are the most serious realities in the world, and undoubtedly more important than any other thing, little attempt is made by humanity to unravel or classify them. I can-

not here enter into the details of these instructions, which indeed would be unintelligible, but they showed me at first what I had not at all apprehended, namely the proportionate importance and unimportance of all the passions and emotions which regulate our relations with other souls. These discourses were given at regular intervals, and much of our time was spent in discussing together or working out in solitude the details of psychological problems, which we did with the exactness of chemical analysis.

What I soon came to understand was that the whole of psychology is ruled by the most exact and immutable laws, in which there is nothing fortuitous or abnormal, and that the exact course of an emotion can be predicted with perfect certainty if only all the data are known.

One of the most striking parts of these discourses was the fact that they were accompanied by illustrations. I will describe the first of these which I saw. The lec-

turer stopped for an instant and held up his hand. In the middle of one of the side-walls of the room was a great shallow arched recess. In this recess there suddenly appeared a scene, not as though it were cast by a lantern on the wall, but as if the wall were broken down, and showed a room beyond.

In the room, a comfortably furnished apartment, there sat two people, a husband and wife, middle-aged people, who were engaged in a miserable dispute about some very trivial matter. The wife was shrill and provocative, the husband curt and contemptuous. They were obviously not really concerned about the subject they were discussing—it only formed a ground for disagreeable personalities. Presently the man went out, saying harshly that it was very pleasant to come back from his work, day after day, to these scenes; to which the woman fiercely retorted that it was all his own fault; and when he was gone, she sat for a time mechanically knitting, with the

tears trickling down her cheeks, and every now and then glancing at the door. After which, with great secrecy, she helped herself to some spirits which she took from a cupboard.

The scene was one of the most vulgar and debasing that can be described or imagined; and it was curious to watch the expressions on the faces of my companions. They wore the air of trained doctors or nurses, watching some disagreeable symptoms, with a sort of trained and serene compassion, neither shocked nor grieved. Then the situation was discussed and analysed, and various suggestions were made which were dealt with by the lecturer, in a way which showed me that there was much for us to master and to understand.

There were many other such illustrations given. They were, I discovered, by no means imaginary cases, projected into our minds by a kind of mental suggestion, but actual things happening upon earth. We saw many strange scenes of tragedy, we had

a glimpse of lunatic asylums and hospitals, of murder even, and of evil passions of anger and lust. We saw scenes of grief and terror; and, stranger still, we saw many things that were being enacted not on the earth, but upon other planets, where the forms and appearances of the creatures concerned were fantastic and strange enough, but where the motive and the emotion were all perfectly clear. At times, too, we saw scenes that were beautiful and touching, high and heroic beyond words. These seemed to come rather by contrast and for encouragement; for the work was distinctly pathological, and dealt with the disasters and complications of emotions, as a rule, rather than with their glories and radiances. But it was all incredibly absorbing and interesting, though what it was to lead up to I did not quite discern. What struck me was the concentration of effort upon human emotion, and still more the fact that other hopes and passions, such as ambition and acquisitiveness, as well as all material

and economic problems, were treated as infinitely insignificant, as just the framework of human life, only interesting in so far as the baser and meaner elements of circumstance can just influence, refining or coarsening, the highest traits of character and emotion.

We were given special cases, too, to study and consider, and here I had the first inkling of how far it is possible for disembodied spirits to be in touch with those who are still in the body.

As far as I can see, no direct intellectual contact is possible, except under certain circumstances. There is, of course, a great deal of thought-vibration taking place in the world, to which the best analogy is wireless telegraphy. There exists an all-pervading emotional medium, into which every thought that is tinged with emotion sends a ripple. Thoughts which are concerned with personal emotion send the firmest ripple into this medium, and all other thoughts and passions affect it, not in pro-

portion to the intensity of the thought, but to the nature of the thought. The scale is perfectly determined and quite unalterable; thus a thought, however strong and intense, which is concerned with wealth or with personal ambition sends a very little ripple into the medium, while a thought of affection is very noticeable indeed, and more noticeable in proportion as it is purer and less concerned with any kind of bodily passion. Thus, strange to say, the thought of a father for a child is a stronger thought than that of a lover for his beloved. I do not know the exact scale of force, which is as exact as that of chemical values—and of course such emotions are apt to be complex and intricate; but the purer and simpler the thought is, the greater is its force. Perhaps the prayers that one prays for those whom one loves send the strongest ripple of all. If it happens that two of these ripples of personal emotion are closely similar, a reflex action takes place; and thus is explained the phenomenon which

often takes place, the sudden sense of a friend's personality, if that friend, in absence, writes one a letter, or bends his mind intently upon one. It also explains the way in which some national or cosmic emotion suddenly gains simultaneous force, and vibrates in thousands of minds at the same time.

The body, by its joys and sufferings alike, offers a great obstruction to these emotional waves. In the land of spirits, as I have indicated, an intention of congenial wills gives an instantaneous perception; but this seems impossible between an embodied spirit and a disembodied spirit. The only communication which seems possible is that of a vague emotion; and it seems quite impossible for any sort of intellectual idea to be directly communicated by a disembodied spirit to an embodied spirit.

On the other hand, the intellectual processes of an embodied spirit are to a certain extent perceptible by a disembodied spirit; but there is a condition to this, and that

is that some emotional sympathy must have existed between the two on earth. If there is no such sympathy, then the body is an absolute bar.

I could look into the mind of Amroth and see his thought take shape, as I could look into a stream, and see a fish dart from a covert of weed. But with those still in the body it is different. And I will therefore proceed to describe a single experience which will illustrate my point.

I was ordered to study the case of a former friend of my own who was still living upon earth. Nothing was told me about him, but, sitting in my cell, I put myself into communication with him upon earth. He had been a contemporary of mine at the university, and we had many interests in common. He was a lawyer; we did not very often meet, but when we did meet it was always with great cordiality and sympathy. I now found him ill and suffering from overwork, in a very melancholy state. When I first visited him, he was sitting

alone, in the garden of a little house in the country. I could see that he was ill and sad; he was making pretence to read, but the book was wholly disregarded.

When I attempted to put my mind into communication with his, it was very difficult to see the drift of his thoughts. I was like a man walking in a dense fog, who can just discern at intervals recognisable objects as they come within his view; but there was no general prospect and no distance. His mind seemed a confused current of distressing memories; but there came a time when his thought dwelt for a moment upon myself; he wished that I could be with him, that he might speak of some of his perplexities. In that instant, the whole grew clearer, and little by little I was enabled to trace the drift of his thoughts. I became aware that though he was indeed suffering from overwork, yet that his enforced rest only removed the mental distraction of his work, and left his mind free to revive a whole troop of pain-

ful thoughts. He had been a man of strong personal ambitions, and had for twenty years been endeavouring to realise them. Now a sense of the comparative worthlessness of his aims had come upon him. He had despised and slighted other emotions; and his mind had in consequence drifted away like a boat into a bitter and barren sea. He was a lonely man, and he was feeling that he had done ill in not multiplying human emotions and relations. He reflected much upon the way in which he had neglected and despised his home affections, while he had formed no ties of his own. Now, too, his career seemed to him at an end, and he had nothing to look forward to but a maimed and invalided life of solitude and failure. Many of his thoughts I could not discern at all—the mist, so to speak, involved them—while many were obscure to me. When he thought about scenes and people whom I had never known, the thought loomed shapeless and dark; but when he thought, as he often did, about his school

and university days, and about his home circle, all of which scenes were familiar to me, I could read his mind with perfect clearness. At the bottom of all lay a sense of deep disappointment and resentment. He doubted the justice of God, and blamed himself but little for his miseries. It was a sad experience at first, because he was falling day by day into more hopeless dejection; while he refused the pathetic overtures of sympathy which the relations in whose house he was—a married sister with her husband and children—offered him. He bore himself with courtesy and consideration, but he was so much worn with fatigue and despondency that he could not take any initiative. But I became aware very gradually that he was learning the true worth and proportion of things—and the months which passed so heavily for him brought him perceptions of the value of which he was hardly aware. Let me say that it was now that the incredible swiftness of time in the spiritual region made

itself felt for me. A month of his sufferings passed to me, contemplating them, like an hour.

I found to my surprise that his thoughts of myself were becoming more frequent; and one day when he was turning over some old letters and reading a number of mine, it seemed to me that his spirit almost recognised my presence in the words which came to his lips, "It seems like yesterday!" I then became blessedly aware that I was actually helping him, and that the very intentness of my own thought was quickening his own.

I discussed the whole case very closely and carefully with one of our instructors, who set me right on several points and made the whole state of things clear to me.

I said to him, "One thing bewilders me; it would almost seem that a man's work upon earth constituted an interruption and a distraction from spiritual influences. It cannot surely be that people in the body should avoid employment, and give them-

selves to secluded meditation? If the soul grows fast in sadness and despondency, it would seem that one should almost have courted sorrow on earth; and yet I cannot believe that to be the case."

"No," he said, "it is not the case; the body has here to be considered. No amount of active exertion clouds the eye of the soul, if only the motive of it is pure and lofty, and if the soul is only set patiently and faithfully upon the true end of life. The body indeed requires due labour and exercise, and the soul can gain health and clearness thereby. But what does cloud the spirit is if it gives itself wholly up to narrow personal aims and ambitions, and uses friendship and love as mere recreations and amusements. Sickness and sorrow are not, as we used to think, fortuitous things; they are given to those who need them, as high and rich opportunities; and they come as truly blessed gifts, when they break a man's thought off from material things, and make him fall back upon the loving affections and

relations of life. When one re-enters the world, a woman's life is sometimes granted to a spirit, because a woman by circumstance and temperament is less tempted to decline upon meaner ambitions and interests than a man; but work and activity are no hindrances to spiritual growth, so long as the soul waits upon God, and desires to learn the lessons of life, rather than to enforce its own conclusions upon others."

"Yes," I said, "I see that. What, then, is the great hindrance in the life of men?"

"Authority," he said, "whether given or taken. That is by far the greatest difficulty that a soul has to contend with. The knowledge of the true conditions of life is so minute and yet so imperfect, when one is in the body, that the man or woman who thinks it a duty to disapprove, to correct, to censure, is in the gravest danger. In the first place it is so impossible to disentangle the true conditions of any human life; to know how far those failures which are lightly called sins are inherited in-

stincts of the body, or the manifestation of immaturity of spirit. Complacency, hard righteousness, spiritual security, severe judgments, are the real foes of spiritual growth; and if a man is in a position to enforce his influence and his will upon others, he can fall very low indeed, and suspend his own growth for a very long and sad period. It is not the criticism or the analysis of others which hurts the soul, so long as it remains modest and sincere and conscious of its own weaknesses. It is when we indulge in secure or compassionate comparisons of our own superior worth that we go backwards."

This was but one of the many cases which I had to investigate. I do not say that this is the work of all spirits in the other world —it is not so; there are many kinds of work and occupation. This was the one now allotted to me; but I did become aware of the intense and loving interest which is bent upon the souls of the living by those who are departed. There is not a soul alive

who is not being thus watched and tended, and helped, as far as help is possible; for no one is ever forced or compelled or frightened into truth, only drawn and wooed by love and care.

I must say a word, too, of the great and noble friendships which I formed at this period of my existence. We were not free to make many of these at a time. Love seems to be the one thing that demands an entire concentration, and though in the world of spirits I became aware that one could be conscious of many of the thoughts of those about me simultaneously, yet the emotion of love, in the earlier stages, is single and exclusive.

I will speak of two only. There were a young man and a young woman who were much associated with me at that time, whom I will call Philip and Anna. Philip was one of the most beautiful of all the spirits I ever came near. His last life upon earth had been a long one, and he had been a teacher. I used to tell him that I wished

I had been under him as a pupil, to which he replied, laughing, that I should have found him very uninteresting. He said to me once that the way in which he had always distinguished the two kinds of teachers on earth had been by whether they were always anxious to teach new books and new subjects, or went on contentedly with the old. "The pleasure," he said, "was in the teaching, in making the thought clear, in tempting the boys to find out what they knew all the time; and the oftener I taught a subject the better I liked it; it was like a big cog-wheel, with a number of little cog-wheels turning with it. But the men who were always wanting to change their subjects were the men who thought of their own intellectual interest first, and very little of the small interests revolving upon it." The charm of Philip was the charm of extreme ingenuousness combined with daring insight. He never seemed to be shocked or distressed by anything. He said one day, "It was not the sensual or the timid or the

ill-tempered boys who used to make me anxious. Those were definite faults and brought definite punishment; it was the hard-hearted, virtuous, ambitious, sensible boys, who were good-humoured and respectable and selfish, who bothered me; one wanted to shake them as a terrier shakes a rat—but there was nothing to get hold of. They were a credit to themselves and to their parents and to the school; and yet they went downhill with every success."

Anna was a woman of singularly unselfish and courageous temperament. She had been, in the course of her last life upon earth, a hospital nurse; and she used to speak gratefully of the long periods when she was nursing some anxious case, when she had interchanged day and night, sleeping when the world was awake, and sitting with a book or needlework by the sick-bed, through the long darkness. "People used to say to me that it must be so depressing; but those were my happiest hours, as the dark brightened into dawn, when many of

the strange mysteries of life and pain and death gave up their secrets to me. But of course," she added with a smile, "it was all very dim to me. I felt the truth rather than saw it; and it is a great joy to me to perceive now what was happening, and how the sad, bewildered hours of pain and misery leave their blessed marks upon the soul, like the tools of the graver on the gem. If only we could learn to plan a little less and to believe a little more, how much simpler it would all be!"

These two became very dear to me, and I learnt much heavenly wisdom from them in long, quiet conferences, where we spoke frankly of all we had felt and known.

XIX

It was at this time, I think, that a great change came over my thoughts, or rather that I realised that a great change had gradually taken place. Till now, I had been dominated and haunted by memories of my latest life upon earth; but at intervals there had visited me a sense of older and purer recollections. I cannot describe exactly how it came about—and, indeed, the memory of what my heavenly progress had hitherto been, as opposed to my earthly experience, was never very clear to me; but I became aware that my life in heaven—I will call it heaven for want of a better name—was my real continuous life, my home-life, so to speak, while my earthly lives had been, to pursue the metaphor, like terms which a boy spends at school, in which he is aware

that he not only learns definite and tangible things, but that his character is hardened and consolidated by coming into contact with the rougher facts of life—duty, responsibility, friendships, angers, treacheries, temptations, routine. The boy returns with gladness to the serener and sweeter atmosphere of home; and just in the same way I felt I had returned to the larger and purer life of heaven. But, as I say, the recollection of my earlier life in heaven, my occupations and experience, was never clear to me, but rather as a luminous and haunting mist. I questioned Amroth about this once, and he said that this was the universal experience, and that the earthly lives one lived were like deep trenches cut across a path, and seemed to interrupt the heavenly sequence; but that as the spirit grew more pure and wise, the consciousness of the heavenly life became more distinct and secure. But he added, what I did not quite understand, that there was little need of memory in the life of heaven, and that it was

to a great extent the inheritance of the body. Memory, he said, was to a great extent an interruption to life; the thought of past failures and mistakes, and especially of unkindnesses and misunderstandings, tended to obscure and complicate one's relations with other souls; but that in heaven, where activity and energy were untiring and unceasing, one lived far more in the emotion and work of the moment, and less in retrospect and prospect. What mattered was actual experience and the effect of experience; memory itself was but an artistic method of dealing with the past, and corresponded to fanciful and delightful anticipations of the future. "The truth is," he said, "that the indulgence of memory is to a great extent a mere sentimental weakness; to live much in recollection is a sign of exhausted and depleted vitality. The further you are removed from your last earthly life, the less tempted you will be to recall it. The highest spirits of all here," he said, "have no temptation ever to revert to retrospect, be-

cause the pure energies of the moment are all-sustaining and all-sufficing."

The only trace I ever noticed of any memory of my past life in heaven was that things sometimes seemed surprisingly familiar to me, and that I had the sense of a serene permanence, which possessed and encompassed me. Indeed I came to believe that the strange feeling of permanence which haunts one upon earth, when one is happy and content, even though one knows that everything is changing and shifting around one, and that all is precarious and uncertain, is in itself a memory of the serene and untroubled continuance of heaven, and a desire to taste it and realise it.

Be this as it may, from the time of my finding my settled task and ordered place in the heavenly community the memories of my old life upon earth began to fade from my thoughts. I could, indeed, always recall them by an effort, but there seemed less and less inclination to do so the more I became absorbed in my heavenly activities.

One thing I noticed in these days; it surprised me very greatly, till I reflected that my surprise was but the consequence of the strange and mournful blindness with regard to spiritual things in which we live under the dark skies of earth. We have there a false idea that somehow or other death takes all the individuality out of a man, obliterating all the whims, prejudices, the thorny and unreasonable dislikes and fancies, oddities, tempers, roughnesses, and subtlenesses from a temperament. Of course there are a good many of these things which disappear together with the body, such as the glooms, suspicions, and cloudy irritabilities, which are caused by fatigue and malaise, and by ill-health generally. But a man's whims and fancies and dislikes do not by any means disappear on earth when he is in good health; on the contrary, they are often apt to be accentuated and emphasised when he is free from pain and care and anxiety, and riding blithely over the waves of life. Indeed there are men

whom I have known who are never kind or sympathetic till they are in some wearing trouble of their own; when they are prosperous and cheerful, they are frankly intolerable, because their mirth turns to derision and insolence.

But one of the reasons why the heavenly life is apt to appear in prospect so wearisome a thing is, because we are brought up to feel that the whole character is flattened out and charged with a serene kind of priggishness, which takes all the salt out of life. The word "saintly," so terribly misapplied on earth, grows to mean, to many of us, an irritating sort of kindness, which treats the interests and animated elements of life with a painful condescension, and a sympathy of which the basis is duty rather than love. The true sanctification, which I came to perceive something of later, is the result of a process of endless patience and infinite delay, and the attainment of it implies a humility, seven times refined in the fires of self-contempt, in

which there remains no smallest touch of superiority or aloofness. How utterly depressing is the feigned interest of the imperfect human saint in matters of mundane concern! How it takes at once both the joy out of holiness and the spirit out of human effort! It is as dreary as the professional sympathy of the secluded student for the news of athletic contests, as the tolerance of the shrewd man of science for the feminine logic of religious sentiment!

But I found to my great content that whatever change had passed over the spirits of my companions, they had at least lost no fibre of their individuality. The change that had passed over them was like the change that passes over a young man, who has lived at the University among dilettante literary designs and mild sociological theorising, when he finds himself plunged into the urgent practical activities of the world. Our happiness was the happiness which comes of intense toil, with no fatigue to dog it, and from a consciousness of the

vital issues which we were pursuing. But my companions had still intellectual faults and preferences, self-confidence, critical intolerance, boisterousness, wilfulness. Stranger still, I found coldness, anger, jealousy, still at work. Of course in the latter case reconciliation was easier, both in the light of common enthusiasm and, still more, because mental communication was so much swifter and easier than it had been on earth. There was no need of those protracted talks, those tiresome explanations which clever people, who really love and esteem each other, fall into on earth —the statements which affirm nothing, the explanations which elucidate nothing, because of the intricacies of human speech and the fact that people use the same words with such different implications and meanings. All those became unnecessary, because one could pierce instantaneously into the very essence of the soul, and manifest, without the need of expression, the regard and affection which lay beneath the cross-

currents of emotion. But love and affection waxed and waned in heaven as on earth; it was weakened and it was transferred. Few souls are so serene on earth as to see with perfect equanimity a friend, whom one loves and trusts, becoming absorbed in some new and exciting emotion, which may not perhaps obliterate the original regard, but which must withdraw from it for a time the energy which fed the flame of the intermitted relation.

It was very strange to me to realise the fact that friendships and intimacies were formed as on earth, and that they lost their freshness, either from some lack of real congeniality or from some divergence of development. Sometimes, I may add, our teachers were consulted by the aggrieved, sometimes they even intervened unasked.

I will freely confess that this all immensely heightened the interests to me of our common life. One could see two spirits drawn together by some secret tie of emotion, and one could see some further influ-

ence strike across and suspend it. One case of this I will mention, which is typical of many. There came among us an extremely lively and rather whimsical spirit, more like a boy than a man. I wondered at first why he was chosen for this work, because he seemed both fitful and even capricious; but I gradually realised in him an extraordinary fineness of perception, and a swiftness of intuition almost unrivalled. He had a power of weighing almost by instinct the constituent elements of character, which seemed to me something like the power of tonality in a musician, the gift of recognising, by pure faculty, what any notes may be, however confusedly jangled on an instrument. It was wonderful to me how often his instantaneous judgments proved more sagacious than our carefully formed conclusions.

This boy became extraordinarily attractive to an older woman who was one of our number, who was solitary and abstracted, and of an intense seriousness of devotion

to her work. It was evident both that she felt his charm intensely and that her disposition was wholly alien to the disposition of the boy himself. In fact, she simply bored him. He took all that he did lightly, and achieved by an intense momentary concentration what she could only achieve by slow reflection. This devotion had in it something that was strangely pathetic, because it took the form in her of making her wish to conciliate the boy's admiration, by treating thoughts and ideas with a lightness and a humour to which she could by no means attain, and which made things worse rather than better, because she could read so easily, in the thoughts of others, the impression that she was attempting a handling of topics which she could not in the least accomplish. But advice was useless. There it was, the old, fierce, constraining attraction of love, as it had been of old, making havoc of comfortable arrangements, attempting the impossible; and yet one knew that she would gain by the pro-

cess, that she was opening a door in her heart that had hitherto been closed, and learning a largeness of view and sympathy in the process. Her fault had ever been, no doubt, to estimate slow and accurate methods too highly, and to believe that all was insecure and untrustworthy that was not painfully accumulated. Now she saw that genius could accomplish without effort or trouble what no amount of homely energy could effect, and a new horizon was unveiled to her. But on the boy it did not seem to have the right result. He might have learned to extend his sympathy to a nature so dumb and plodding; and this coldness of his called down a rebuke of what seemed almost undue sternness from one of our teachers. It was not given in my presence, but the boy, bewildered by the severity which he did not anticipate, coupled indeed with a hint that he must be prepared, if he could not exhibit a more elastic sympathy, to have his course suspended in favour of some more simple discipline, told

me the whole matter. "What am I to do?" he said. "I cannot care for Barbara; her whole nature upsets me and revolts me. I know she is very good and all that, but I simply am not myself when she is by; it is like taking a run with a tortoise!"

"Well," I said, "no one expects you to give up all your time to taking tortoises for runs; but I suppose that tortoises have their rights, and must not be jerked along on their backs, like a sledge."

"Oh," said he, "you are all against me, I know; and I am not sure that this place is not rather too solemn for me. What is the good of being wiser than the aged, if one has more commandments to keep?"

Things, however, settled down in time. Barbara, I think, must have been taken to task as well, because she gave up her attempts at wit; and the end of it was that a quiet friendship sprang up between the incongruous pair, like that between a wayward young brother and a plain, kindly,

and elderly sister, of a very fine and chivalrous kind.

It must not be thought that we spent our time wholly in these emotional relations. It was a place of hard and urgent work; but I came to realise that, just as on earth, institutions like schools and colleges, where a great variety of natures are gathered in close and daily contact, are shot through and through with strange currents of emotion, which some people pay no attention to, and others dismiss as mere sentimentality, so it was also bound to be beyond, with this difference, that whereas on earth we are shy and awkward with our friendships, and all sorts of physical complications intervene, in the other world they assume their frank importance. I saw that much of what is called the serious business of life is simply and solely necessitated by bodily needs, and is really entirely temporary and trivial, while the real life of the soul, which underlies it all, stifled and subdued, pent-up uneasily and cramped un-

kindly like a bright spring of water under the superincumbent earth, finds its way at last to the light. On earth we awkwardly divide this impulse; we speak of the relation of the soul to others and of the relation of the soul to God as two separate things. We pass over the words of Christ in the Gospel, which directly contradict this, and which make the one absolutely dependent on, and conditional on, the other. We speak of human affection as a thing which may come in between the soul and God, while it is in reality the swiftest access thither. We speak as though ambition were itself made more noble, if it sternly abjures all multiplication of human tenderness. We speak of a life which sacrifices material success to emotion as a failure and an irresponsible affair. The truth is the precise opposite. All the ambitions which have their end in personal prestige are wholly barren; the ambitions which aim at social amelioration have a certain nobility about them, though they substitute a tor-

tuous by-path for a direct highway. And the plain truth is that all social amelioration would grow up as naturally and as fragrantly as a flower, if we could but refine and strengthen and awaken our slumbering emotions, and let them grow out freely to gladden the little circle of earth in which we live and move.

XX

It was at this time that I had a memorable interview with the Master of the College. He appeared very little among us, though he occasionally gave us a short instruction, in which he summed up the teaching on a certain point. He was a man of extraordinary impressiveness, mainly, I think, because he gave the sense of being occupied in much larger and wider interests. I often pondered over the question why the short, clear, rather dry discourses which fell from his lips appeared to be so far more weighty and momentous than anything else that was ever said to us. He used no arts of exhortation, showed no emotion, seemed hardly conscious of our presence; and if one caught his eye as he spoke, one became aware of a curious tremor of awe. He never made any appeal to our hearts or feelings;

but it always seemed as if he had condescended for a moment to put aside far bigger and loftier designs in order to drop a fruit of ripened wisdom in our way. He came among us, indeed, like a statesman rather than like a teacher. The brief interviews we had with him were regarded with a sort of terror, but produced, in me at least, an almost fanatical respect and admiration. And yet I had no reason to suppose that he was not, like all of us, subject to the law of life and pilgrimage, though one could not conceive of him as having to enter the arena of life again as a helpless child!

On this occasion I was summoned suddenly to his presence. I found him, as usual, bent over his work, which he did not intermit, but merely motioned me to be seated. Presently he put away his papers from him, and turned round upon me. One of the disconcerting things about him was the fact that his thought had a peculiarly compelling tendency, and that

while he read one's mind in a flash, his own thoughts remained very nearly impenetrable. On this occasion he commended me for my work and my relations with my fellow-students, adding that I had made rapid progress. He then said, "I have two questions to ask you. Have you any special relations, either with any one whom you have left behind you on earth, or with any one with whom you have made acquaintance since you quitted it, which you desire to pursue?"

I told him, which was the truth, that since my stay in the College I had become so much absorbed in the studies of the place that I seemed to have became strangely oblivious of my external friends, but that it was more a suspension than a destruction of would-be relations.

"Yes," he said, "I perceive that that is your temperament. It has its effectiveness, no doubt, but it also has its dangers; and, whatever happens, one ought never to be able to accuse oneself justly of any disloyalty."

He seemed to wait for me to speak, whereupon I mentioned a very dear friend of my days of earth; but I added that most of those whom I had loved best had predeceased me, and that I had looked forward to a renewal of our intercourse. I also mentioned the names of Charmides and Cynthia, the latter of whom was in memory strangely near to my heart.

He seemed satisfied with this. Then he said, "It is true that we have to multiply relationships with others, both in the world and out of it; but we must also practise economy. We must not abandon ourselves to passing fancies, or be subservient to charm, while if we have made an emotional mistake, and have been disappointed with one whom we have taken the trouble to win, we must guard such conquests with a close and peculiar tenderness. But enough of that, for I have to ask you if there is any special work for which you feel yourself disposed. There is a great choice of employment here. You may

choose, if you will, just to live the spiritual life and discharge whatever duties of citizenship you may be called upon to perform. That is what most spirits do. I need not perhaps tell you"—here he smiled—"that freedom from the body does not confer upon any one, as our poor brothers and sisters upon earth seem to think, a heavenly vocation. Neither of course is the earthly fallacy about a mere absorption in worship a true one—only to a very few is that conceded. Still less is this a life of leisure. To be leisurely here is permitted only to the wearied, and to those childish creatures with whom you have spent some time in their barren security. I do not think you are suited for the work of recording the great scheme of life, nor do I think you are made for a teacher. You are not sufficiently impartial! For mere labour you are not suited; and yet I hardly think you would be fit to adopt the most honourable task which your friend Amroth so finely fulfils—a guide and messenger. What do you think?"

I said at once that I did not wish to have to make a decision, but that I preferred to leave it to him. I added that though I was conscious of my deficiencies, I did not feel conscious of any particular capacities, except that I found character a very fascinating study, especially in connection with the circumstances of life upon earth.

"Very well," he said, "I think that you may perhaps be best suited to the work of deciding what sort of life will best befit the souls who are prepared to take up their life upon earth again. That is a task of deep and infinite concern; it may surprise you," he added, "to learn that this is left to the decision of other souls. But it is, of course, the goal at which all earthly social systems are aiming, the right apportionment of circumstances to temperament, and you must not be surprised to find that here we have gone much further in that direction, though even here the system is not perfected; and you cannot begin to appre-

hend that fact too soon. It is unfortunate that on earth it is commonly believed, owing to the deadening influence of material causes, that beyond the grave everything is done with a Divine unanimity. But of course, if that were so, further growth and development would be impossible, and in view of infinite perfectibility there is yet very much that is faulty and incomplete. But I am not sure what lies before you; there is something in your temperament which a little baffles me, and our plans may have to be changed. Your very absorption in your work, your quick power of forgetting and throwing off impressions has its dangers. But I will bear in mind what you have said, and you may for the present resume your studies, and I will once more commend you; you have done well hitherto, and I will say frankly that I regard you as capable of useful and honourable work." He bowed in token of dismissal, and I went back to my work with unbounded gratitude and enthusiasm.

XXI

Some time after this I was surprised one morning at the sudden entrance of Amroth into my cell. He came in with a very bright and holiday aspect, and, assuming a paternal air, said that he had heard a very creditable account of my work and conduct, and that he had obtained leave for me to have an exeat. I suppose that I showed signs of impatience at the interruption, for he broke into a laugh, and said, "Well, I am going to insist. I believe you are working too hard, and we must not overstrain our faculties. It was bad enough in the old days, but then it was generally the poor body which suffered first. But indeed it is quite possible to overwork here, and you have the dim air of the pale student. Come," he said, "whatever happens, do not become priggish. Not to want a holiday is

a sign of spiritual pride. Besides, I have some curious things to show you."

I got up and said that I was ready, and Amroth led the way like a boy out for a holiday. He was brimming over with talk, and told me some stories about my friends in the land of delight, interspersing them with imitation of their manner and gesture, which made me giggle—Amroth was an admirable mimic. "I had hopes of Charmides," he said; "your stay there aroused his curiosity. But he has gone back to his absurd tones and half-tones, and is nearly insupportable. Cynthia is much more sensible, but Lucius is a nuisance, and Charmides, by the way, has become absurdly jealous of him. They really are very silly; but I have a pleasant plot, which I will unfold to you."

As we went down the interminable stairs, I said to Amroth, "There is a question I want to ask you. Why do we have to go and come, up and down, backwards and forwards, in this absurd way, as if we were

still in the body? Why not just slip off the leads, and fly down over the crags like a pair of pigeons? It all seems to me so terribly material."

Amroth looked at me with a smile. "I don't advise you to try," he said. "Why, little brother, of course we are just as limited here in these ways. The material laws of earth are only a type of the laws here. They all have a meaning which remains true."

"But," I said, "we can visit the earth with incredible rapidity?"

"How can I explain?" said Amroth. "Of course we can do that, because the material universe is so extremely small in comparison. All the stars in the world are here but as a heap of sand, like the motes which dance in a sunbeam. There is no question of size, of course! But there is such a thing as spiritual nearness and spiritual distance for all that. The souls who do not return to earth are very far off, as you will sometime see. But we mes-

sengers have our short cuts, and I shall take advantage of them to-day."

We went out of the great door of the fortress, and I felt a sense of relief. It was good to put it all behind one. For a long time I talked to Amroth about all my doings. "Come," he said at last, "this will never do! You are becoming something of a bore! Do you know that your talk is very provincial? You seem to have forgotten about every one and everything except your Philips and Annas—very worthy creatures, no doubt—and the Master, who is a very able man, but not the little demigod you believe. You are hypnotised! It is indeed time for you to have a holiday. Why, I believe you have half forgotten about me, and yet you made a great fuss when I quitted you."

I smiled, frowned, blushed. It was indeed true. Now that he was with me I loved him as well, indeed better than ever; but I had not been thinking very much about him.

We went over the moorlands in the keen air, Amroth striding cleanly and lightly over the heather. Then we began to descend into the valley, through a fine forest country, somewhat like the chestnut-woods of the Apennines. The view was of incomparable beauty and width. I could see a great city far out in the plain, with a river entering it and leaving it, like a ribbon of silver. There were rolling ridges beyond. On the left rose huge, shadowy, snow-clad hills, rising to one tremendous dome of snow.

"Where are you going to take me?" I said to Amroth.

"Never mind," said he; "it's my day and my plan for once. You shall see what you shall see, and it will amuse me to hear your ingenuous conjectures."

We were soon on the outskirts of the city we had seen, which seemed a different kind of place from any I had yet visited. It was built, I perceived, upon an exactly conceived plan, of a stately, classical kind of architec-

ture, with great gateways and colonnades. There were people about, rather silent and serious-looking, soberly clad, who saluted us as we passed, but made no attempt to talk to us. "This is rather a tiresome place, I always think," said Amroth; "but you ought to see it."

We went along the great street and reached a square. I was surprised at the elderly air of all we met. We found ourselves opposite a great building with a dome, like a church. People were going in under the portico, and we went in with them. They treated us as strangers, and made courteous way for us to pass.

Inside, the footfalls fell dumbly upon a great carpeted floor. It was very like a great church, except that there was no altar or sign of worship. At the far end, under an alcove, was a statue of white marble gleaming white, with head and hand uplifted. The whole place had a solemn and noble air. Out of the central nave there opened a series of great vaulted chapels; and I

could now see that in each chapel there was a dark figure, in a sort of pulpit, addressing a standing audience. There were names on scrolls over the doors of the light iron-work screens which separated the chapels from the nave, but they were in a language I did not understand.

Amroth stopped at the third of the chapels, and said, "Here, this will do." We came in, and as before there was a courteous notice taken of us. A man in black came forward, and led us to a high seat, like a pew, near the preacher, from which we could survey the crowd. I was struck with their look of weariness combined with intentness.

The lecturer, a young man, had made a pause, but upon our taking our places, he resumed his speech. It was a discourse, as far as I could make out, on the development of poetry; he was speaking of lyrical poetry. I will not here reproduce it. I will only say that anything more acute, delicate, and discriminating, and, I must add,

more entirely valueless and pedantic, I do not think I ever heard. It must have required immense and complicated knowledge. He was tracing the development of a certain kind of dramatic lyric, and what surprised me was that he supplied the subtle intellectual connection, the missing links, so to speak, of which there is no earthly record. Let me give a single instance. He was accounting for a rather sudden change of thought in a well-known poet, and he showed that it had been brought about by his making the acquaintance of a certain friend who had introduced him to a new range of subjects, and by his study of certain books. These facts are unrecorded in his published biography, but the analysis of the lecturer, done in a few pointed sentences, not only carried conviction to the mind, but just, so to speak, laid the truth bare. And yet it was all to me incredibly sterile and arid. Not the slightest interest was taken in the emotional or psychological side; it was all purely and exactly scientific.

We waited until the end of the address, which was greeted with decorous applause, and the hall was emptied in a moment.

We visited other chapels where the same sort of thing was going on in other subjects. It all produced in me a sort of stupefaction, both at the amazing knowledge involved, and in the essential futility of it all.

Before we left the building we went up to the statue, which represented a female figure, looking upwards, with a pure and delicate beauty of form and gesture that was inexpressibly and coldly lovely.

We went out in silence, which seemed to be the rule of the place.

When we came away from the building we were accosted by a very grave and courteous person, who said that he perceived that we were strangers, and asked if he could be of any service to us, and whether we proposed to make a stay of any duration. Amroth thanked him, and said smilingly that we were only passing

through. The gentleman said that it was a pity, because there was much of interest to hear. "In this place," he said with a deprecating gesture, "we grudge every hour that is not devoted to thought." He went on to inquire if we were following any particular line of study, and as our answers were unsatisfactory, he said that we could not do better than begin by attending the school of literature. "I observed," he said, "that you were listening to our Professor, Sylvanus, with attention. He is devoting himself to the development of poetical form. It is a rich subject. It has generally been believed that poets work by a sort of native inspiration, and that the poetic gift is a sort of heightening of temperament. But Sylvanus has proved—I think I may go so far as to say this—that this is all pure fancy, and what is worse, unsound fancy. It is all merely a matter of heredity, and the apparent accidents on which poetical expression depends can be analysed exactly and precisely into the most commonplace

and simple elements. It is only a question of proportion. Now we who value clearness of mind above everything, find this a very refreshing thought. The real crown and sum of human achievement, in the intellectual domain, is to see things clearly and exactly, and upon that clearness all progress depends. We have disposed by this time of most illusions; and the same scientific method is being strenuously applied to all other processes of human endeavour. It is even hinted that Sylvanus has practically proved that the imaginative element in literature is purely a taint of barbarism, though he has not yet announced the fact. But many of his class are looking forward to his final lecture on the subject as to a profoundly sensational event, which is likely to set a deep mark upon all our conceptions of literary endeavour. So that," he said with a tolerant smile, gently rubbing his hands together, "our life here is not by any means destitute of the elements of excitement, though we most of us, of course,

aim at the acquisition of a serene and philosophic temper. But I must not delay you," he added; "there is much to see and to hear, and you will be welcomed everywhere: and indeed I am myself somewhat closely engaged, though in a subject which is not fraught with such polite emollience. I attend the school of metaphysics, from which we have at last, I hope, eliminated the last traces of that debasing element of psychology, which has so long vitiated the exact study of the subject."

He took himself off with a bow, and I gazed blankly at Amroth. "The conversation of that very polite person," I said, "is like a bad dream! What is this extraordinarily depressing place? Shall I have to undergo a course here?"

"No, my dear boy," said Amroth. "This is rather out of your depth. But I am somewhat disappointed at your view of the situation. Surely these are all very important matters? Your disposition is, I am afraid, incurably frivolous! How could

people be more worthily employed than in getting rid of the last traces of intellectual error, and in referring everything to its actual origin? Did not your heart burn within you at his luminous exposition? I had always thought you a boy of intellectual promise."

"Amroth," I said, "I will not be made fun of. This is the most dreadful place I have ever seen or conceived of! It frightens me. The dryness of pure science is terrifying enough, but after all that has a kind of strange beauty, because it deals either with transcendental ideas of mathematical relation, or with the deducing of principle from accumulated facts. But here the object appears to be to eliminate the human element from humanity. I insist upon knowing where you have brought me, and what is going on here."

"Well, then," said Amroth, "I will conceal it from you no longer. This is the paradise of thought, where meagre and spurious philosophers, and all who have

submerged life in intellect, have their reward. It *is,* as you say, a very dreary place for children of nature like you and me. But I do not suppose that there is a happier or a busier place in all our dominions. The worst of it is that it is so terribly hard to get out of. It is a blind alley and leads nowhere. Every step has to be retraced. These people have to get a very severe dose of homely life to do them any good; and the worst of it is that they are so entirely virtuous. They have never had the time or the inclination to be anything else. And they are among the most troublesome and undisciplined of all our people. But I see you have had enough; and unless you wish to wait for Professor Sylvanus's sensational pronouncement, we will go elsewhere, and have some other sort of fun. But you must not be so much upset by these things."

"It would kill me," I said, "to hear any more of these lectures, and if I had to listen to much of our polite friend's conversation, I should go out of my mind. I

would rather fall into the hands of the cragmen! I would rather have a stand-up fight than be slowly stifled with interesting information. But where do these unhappy people come from?"

"A few come from universities," said Amroth, "but they are not as a rule really learned men. They are more the sort of people who subscribe to libraries, and belong to local literary societies, and go into a good many subjects on their own account. But really learned men are almost always more aware of their ignorance than of their knowledge, and recognise the vitality of life, even if they do not always exhibit it. But come, we are losing time, and we must go further afield."

XXII

We went some considerable distance, after leaving our intellectual friends, through very beautiful wooded country, and as we went we talked with much animation about the intellectual life and its dangers. It had always, I confess, appeared to me a harmless life enough; not very effective, perhaps, and possibly liable to encourage a man in a trivial sort of self-conceit; but I had always looked upon that as an instinctive kind of self-respect, which kept an intellectual person from dwelling too sorely upon the sense of ineffectiveness; as an addiction not more serious in its effects upon character than the practice of playing golf, a thing in which a leisurely person might immerse himself, and cultivate a decent sense of self-importance. But Amroth showed me that the danger of it lay in

the tendency to consider the intellect to be the basis of all life and progress. "The intellectual man," he said, "is inclined to confuse his own acute perception of the movement of thought with the originating impulse of that movement. But of course thought is a thing which ebbs and flows, like public opinion, according to its own laws, and is not originated but only perceived by men of intellectual ability. The danger of it is a particularly arid sort of self-conceit. It is as if the Lady of Shalott were to suppose that she created life by observing and rendering it in her magic web, whereas her devotion to her task simply isolates her from the contact with other minds and hearts, which is the one thing worth having. That is, of course, the danger of the artist as well as of the philosopher. They both stand aside from the throng, and are so much absorbed in the aspect of thought and emotion that they do not realise that they are separated from it. They are consequently spared, when

they come here, the punishment which falls upon those who have mixed greedily, selfishly, and cruelly with life, of which you will have a sight before long. But that place of punishment is not nearly so sad or depressing a place as the paradise of delight, and the paradise of intellect, because the sufferers have no desire to stay there, can repent and feel ashamed, and therefore can suffer, which is always hopeful. But the artistic and intellectual have really starved their capacity for suffering, the one by treating all emotion as spectacular, and the other by treating it as a puerile interruption to serious things. It takes people a long time to work their way out of self-satisfaction! But there is another curious place I wish you to visit. It is a dreadful place in a way, but by no means consciously unhappy," and Amroth pointed to a great building which stood on a slope of the hill above the forest, with a wide and beautiful view from it. Before very long we came to a high stone wall with

a gate carefully guarded. Here Amroth said a few words to a porter, and we went up through a beautiful terraced park. In the park we saw little knots of people walking aimlessly about, and a few more solitary figures. But in each case they were accompanied by people whom I saw to be warders. We passed indeed close to an elderly man, rather fantastically dressed, who looked possessed with a kind of flighty cheerfulness. He was talking to himself with odd, emphatic gestures, as if he were ticking off the points of a speech. He came up to us and made us an effusive greeting, praising the situation and convenience of the place, and wishing us a pleasant sojourn. He then was silent for a moment, and added, "Now there is a matter of some importance on which I should like your opinion." At this the warder who was with him, a strong, stolid-looking man, with an expression at once slightly contemptuous and obviously kind, held up his hand and said, "You will, no doubt, sir, remember

that you have undertaken—" "Not a word, not a word," said our friend; "of course you are right! I have really nothing to say to these gentlemen."

We went up to the building, which now became visible, with its long and stately front of stone. Here again we were admitted with some precaution, and after a few minutes there came a tall and benevolent-looking man, to whom Amroth spoke at some length. The man then came up to me, said that he was very glad to welcome me, and that he would be delighted to show us the place.

We went through fine and airy corridors, into which many doors, as of cells, opened. Occasionally a man or a woman, attended by a male or a female warder, passed us. The inmates had all the same kind of air —a sort of amused dignity, which was very marked. Presently our companion opened a door with his key and we went in. It was a small, pleasantly-furnished room. Some books, apparently of devotion, lay on

the table. There was a little kneeling-desk near the window, and the room had a half-monastic air about it. When we entered, an elderly man, with a very serene face, was looking earnestly into the door of a cupboard in the wall, which he was holding open; there was, so far as I could see, nothing in the cupboard; but the inmate seemed to be struggling with an access of rather overpowering mirth. He bowed to us. Our conductor greeted him respectfully, and then said, "There is a stranger here who would like a little conversation with you, if you can spare the time."

"By all means," said the inmate, with a very ingratiating smile. "It is very kind of him to call upon me, and my time is entirely at his disposal."

Our conductor said to me that he and Amroth had some brief business to transact, and that they would call for me again in a moment. The inmate bowed, and seemed almost impatient for them to depart. He motioned me to a chair, and the moment

they left us he began to talk with great animation. He asked me if I was a new inmate, and when I said no, only a visitor, he looked at me compassionately, saying that he hoped I might some day attain to the privilege. "This," he said, "is the abode of final and lasting peace. No one is admitted here unless his convictions are of the firmest and most ardent character; it is a reward for faithful service. But as our time is short, I must tell you," he said, "of a very curious experience I have had this very morning—a spiritual experience of the most reassuring character. You must know that I held a high official position in the religious world—I will mention no details—and I found at an early age, I am glad to say, the imperative necessity of forming absolutely impregnable convictions. I went to work in the most business-like way. I devoted some years to hard reading and solid thought, and I found that the sect to which I belonged was lacking in certain definite notes of di-

vine truth, while the weight of evidence pointed in the clearest possible manner to the fact that one particular section of the Church had preserved absolutely intact the primitive faith of the Saints, and was without any shadow of doubt the perfectly logical development of the principles of the Gospel. Mine is not a nature that can admit of compromise; and at considerable sacrifice of worldly prospects I transferred my allegiance, and was instantly rewarded by a perfect serenity of conviction which has never faltered.

"I had a friend with whom I had often discussed the matter, who was much of my way of thinking. But though I showed him the illogical nature of his position, he hung back—whether from material motives or from mere emotional associations I will not now stop to inquire. But I could not palter with the truth. I expostulated with him, and pointed out to him in the sternest terms the eternal distinctions involved. I broke off all relations with him ultimately.

And after a life spent in the most solemn and candid denunciation of the fluidity of religious belief, which is the curse of our age, though it involved me in many of the heart-rending suspensions of human intercourse with my nearest and dearest so plainly indicated in the Gospel, I passed at length, in complete tranquillity, to my final rest. The first duty of the sincere believer is inflexible intolerance. If a man will not recognise the truth when it is plainly presented to him, he must accept the eternal consequences of his act—separation from God, and absorption in guilty and awestruck regret, which admits of no repentance.

"One of the privileges of our sojourn here is that we have a strange and beautiful device—a window, I will call it—which admits one to a sight of the spiritual world. I was to-day contemplating, not without pain, but with absolute confidence in its justice, the sufferings of some of these lost souls, and I observed, I cannot say with

satisfaction, but with complete submission, the form of my friend, whom my testimony might have saved, in eternal misery. I have the tenderest heart of any man alive. It has cost me a sore struggle to subdue it —it is more unruly even than the will— but you may imagine that it is a matter of deep and comforting assurance to reflect that on earth the door, the one door, to salvation is clearly and plainly indicated —though few there be that find it—and that this signal mercy has been vouchsafed to me. I have then the peace of knowing, not only that my choice was right, but that all those to whom the truth is revealed have the power to choose it. I am a firm believer in the uncovenanted mercies vouchsafed to those who have not had the advantages of clear presentment, but for the deliberately unfaithful, for all sinners against light, the sentence is inflexible."

He closed his eyes, and a smile played over his features.

I found it very difficult to say anything

in answer to this monologue; but I asked my companion whether he did not think that some clearer revelation might be made, after the bodily death, to those who for some human frailty were unable to receive it.

"An intelligent question," said my companion, "but I am obliged to answer in the negative. Of course the case is different for those who have accepted the truth loyally, even if their record is stained by the foulest and most detestable of crimes. It is the moral and intellectual adhesion that matters; that once secured, conduct is comparatively unimportant, if the soul duly recurs to the medicine of penitence and contrition so mercifully provided. I have the utmost indulgence for every form of human frailty. I may say that I never shrank from contact with the grossest and vilest forms of continuous wrong-doing, so long as I was assured that the true doctrines were unhesitatingly and submissively accepted. A soul which admits the supremacy of

authority can go astray like a sheep that is lost, but as long as it recognises its fold and the authority of the divine law, it can be sought and found.

"The little window of which I spoke has given me indubitable testimony of this. There was a man I knew in the flesh, who was regarded as a monster of cruelty and selfishness. He ill-treated his wife and misused his children; his life was spent in gross debauchery, and his conduct on several occasions outstepped the sanctions of legality. He was a forger and an embezzler. I do not attempt to palliate his faults, and there will be a heavy reckoning to pay. But he made his submission at the last, after a long and prostrating illness; and I have ocular demonstration of the fact that, after a mercifully brief period of suffering, he is numbered among the blest. That is a sustaining thought."

He then with much courtesy invited me to partake of some refreshment, which I gratefully declined. Once or twice he rose,

and opening the little cupboard door, which revealed nothing but a white wall, he drank in encouragement from some hidden sight. He then invited me to kneel with him, and prayed fervently and with some emotion that light might be vouchsafed to souls on earth who were in darkness. Just as he concluded, Amroth appeared with our conductor. The latter made a courteous inquiry after my host's health and comfort. "I am perfectly happy here," he said, "perfectly happy. The attentions I receive are indeed more than I deserve; and I am specially grateful to my kind visitor, whose indulgence I must beg for my somewhat prolonged statement—but when one has a cause much at heart," he added with a smile, "some prolixity is easily excused."

As we re-entered the corridor, our conductor asked me if I would care to pay any more visits. "The case you have seen," he said, "is an extremely typical and interesting one."

"Have you any hope," said Amroth, "of recovery?"

"Of course, of course," said our conductor with a smile. "Nothing is hopeless here; our cures are complete and even rapid; but this is a particularly obstinate one!"

"Well," said Amroth, "would you like to see more?"

"No," I said, "I have seen enough. I cannot now bear any more."

Our conductor smiled indulgently.

"Yes," he said, "it is bewildering at first; but one sees wonderful things here! This is our library," he added, leading us to a great airy room, full of books and reading-desks, where a large number of inmates were sitting reading and writing. They glanced up at us with friendly and contented smiles. A little further on we came to another cell, before which our conductor stopped, and looked at me. "I should like," he said, "if you are not too tired, just to take you in here; there is

a patient, who is very near recovery indeed, in here, and it would do him good to have a little talk with a stranger."

I bowed, and we went in. A man was sitting in a chair with his head in his hands. An attendant was sitting near the window reading a book. The patient, at our entry, removed his hands from his face and looked up, half impatiently, with an air of great suffering, and then slowly rose.

"How are you feeling, dear sir?" said our conductor quietly.

"Oh," said the man, looking at us, "I am better, much better. The light is breaking in, but it is a sore business, when I was so strong in my pride."

"Ah," said our guide, "it is indeed a slow process; but happiness and health must be purchased; and every day I see clearly that you are drawing nearer to the end of your troubles—you will soon be leaving us! But now I want you kindly to bestir yourself, and talk a little to this friend of ours, who has not been long with us, and finds

the place somewhat bewildering. You will be able to tell him something of what is passing in your mind; it will do you good to put it into words, and it will be a help to him."

"Very well," said the man gravely, "I will do my best." And the others withdrew, leaving me with the man. When they had gone, the man asked me to be seated, and leaning his head upon his hand he said, "I do not know how much you know and how little, so I will tell you that I left the world very confident in a particular form of faith, and very much disposed to despise and even to dislike those who did not agree with me. I had lived, I may say, uprightly and purely, and I will confess that I even welcomed all signs of laxity and sinfulness in my opponents, because it proved what I believed, that wrong conduct sprang naturally from wrong belief. I came here in great content, and thought that this place was the reward of faithful living. But I had a great shock. I was

very tenderly attached to one whom I left on earth, and the severest grief of my life was that she did not think as I did, but used to plead with me for a wider outlook and a larger faith in the designs of God. She used to say to me that she felt that God had different ways of saving different people, and that people were saved by love and not by doctrine. And this I combated with all my might. I used to say, 'Doctrine first, and love afterwards,' to which she often said, 'No, love is first!'

"Well, some time ago I had a sight of her; she had died, and entered this world of ours. She was in a very different place from this, but she thought of me without ceasing, and her desire prevailed. I saw her, though I was hidden from her, and looked into her heart, and discerned that the one thing which spoiled her joy was that I was parted from her.

"And after that I had no more delight in my security. I began to suffer and to yearn. And then, little by little, I began

to see that it is love after all which binds us together, and which draws us to God; but my difficulty is this, that I still believe that my faith is true; and if that is true, then other faiths cannot be true also, and then I fall into sad bewilderment and despair." He stopped and looked at me fixedly.

"But," I said, "if I may carry the thought further, might not all be true? Two men may be very unlike each other in form and face and thought—yet both are very man. It would be foolish arguing, if a man were to say, 'I am indeed a man, and because my friend is unlike me—taller, lighter-complexioned, swifter of thought—therefore he cannot be a man.' Or, again, two men may travel by the same road, and see many different things, yet it is the same road they have both travelled; and one need not say to the other, 'You cannot have travelled by the same road, because you did not see the violets on the bank under the wood, or the spire that peeped

through the trees at the folding of the valleys—and therefore you are a liar and a deceiver!' If one believes firmly in one's own faith, one need not therefore say that all who do not hold it are perverse and wilful. There is no excuse, indeed, for not holding to what we believe to be true, but there is no excuse either for interfering with the sincere belief of another, unless one can persuade him he is wrong. Is not the mistake to think that one holds the truth in its entirety, and that one has no more to learn and to perceive? I myself should welcome differences of faith, because it shows me that faith is a larger thing even than I know. What another sees may be but a thought that is hidden from me, because the truth may be seen from a different angle. To complain that we cannot see it all is as foolish as when the child is vexed because it cannot see the back of the moon. And it seems to me that our duty is not to quarrel with others who see things that we do not see, but to rejoice

with them, if they will allow us, and meanwhile to discern what is shown to us as faithfully as we can."

The man heard me with a strange smile. "Yes," he said, "you are certainly right, and I bless the goodness that sent you hither; but when you are gone, I doubt that I shall fall back into my old perplexities, and say to myself that though men may see different parts of the same thing, they cannot see the same thing differently."

"I think," I said, "that even that is possible, because on earth things are often mere symbols, and clothe themselves in material forms; and it is the form which deludes us. I do not myself doubt that grace flows into us by very different channels. We may not deny the claim of any one to derive grace from any source or symbol that he can. The only thing we may and must dare to dispute is the claim that only by one channel may grace flow. But I think that the words of the one whom you loved, of whom you spoke, are indeed

true, and that the love of each other and of God is the force which draws us, by whatever rite or symbol or doctrine it may be interpreted. That, as I read it, is the message of Christ, who gave up all things for utter love."

As I said this, our guide and Amroth entered the cell. The man rose up quickly, and drawing me apart, thanked me very heartily and with tears in his eyes; and so we said farewell. When we were outside, I said to the guide, "May I ask you one question? Would it be of use if I remained here for a time to talk with that poor man? It seemed a relief to him to open his heart, and I would gladly be with him and try to comfort him."

The guide shook his head kindly. "No," he said, "I think not. I recognise your kindness very fully—but a soul like this must find the way alone; and there is one who is helping him faster than any of us can avail to do; and besides," he added, "he is very near indeed to his release."

So we went to the door, and said farewell; and Amroth and I went forward. Then I said to him as we went down through the terraced garden, and saw the inmates wandering about, lost in dreams, "This must be a sad place to live in, Amroth!"

"No, indeed," said he, "I do not think that there are any happier than those who have the charge here. When the patients are in the grip of this disease, they are themselves only too well content; and it is a blessed thing to see the approach of doubt and suffering, which means that health draws near. There is no place in all our realm where one sees so clearly and beautifully the instant and perfect mercy of God, and the joy of pain." And so we passed together out of the guarded gate.

XXIII

"Well," said Amroth, with a smile, as we went out into the forest, "I am afraid that the last two visits have been rather a strain. We must find something a little less serious; but I am going to fill up all your time. You had got too much taken up with your psychology, and we must not live too much on theory, and spin problems, like the spider, out of our own insides; but we will not spend too much time in trudging over this country, though it is well worth it. Did you ever see anything more beautiful than those pine-trees on the slope there, with the blue distance between their stems? But we must not make a business of landscape-gazing like our friend Charmides! We are men of affairs, you and I. Come, I will show you a thing. Shut your eyes

for a minute and give me your hand. Now!"

A sudden breeze fanned my face, sweet and odorous, like the wind out of a wood. "Now," said Amroth, "we have arrived! Where do you think we are?"

The scene had changed in an instant. We were in a wide, level country, in green water-meadows, with a full stream brimming its grassy banks, in willowy loops. Not far away, on a gently rising ground, lay a long, straggling village, of gabled houses, among high trees. It was like the sort of village that you may find in the pleasant Wiltshire countryside, and the sight filled me with a rush of old and joyful memories.

"It is such a relief," I said, "to realise that if man is made in the image of God, heaven is made in the image of England!"

"That is only how you see it, child," said Amroth. "Some of my own happiest days were spent at Tooting: would you be

surprised if I said that it reminded me of Tooting?"

"I am surprised at nothing," I said. "I only know that it is all very considerate!"

We entered the village, and found a large number of people, mostly young, going cheerfully about all sorts of simple work. Many of them were gardening, and the gardens were full of old-fashioned flowers, blooming in wonderful profusion. There was an air of settled peace about the place, the peace that on earth one often dreamed of finding, and indeed thought one had found on visiting some secluded place—only to discover, alas! on a nearer acquaintance, that life was as full of anxieties and cares there as elsewhere. There were one or two elderly people going about, giving directions or advice, or lending a helping hand. The workers nodded blithely to us, but did not suspend their work.

"What surprises me," I said to Amroth, "is to find every one so much occupied wherever we go. One heard so much on earth

about craving for rest, that one grew to fancy that the other life was all going to be a sort of solemn meditation, with an occasional hymn."

"Yes, indeed," said Amroth, "it was the body that was tired—the soul is always fresh and strong—but rest is not idleness. There is no such thing as unemployment here, and there is hardly time, indeed, for all we have to do. Every one really loves work. The child plays at working, the man of leisure works at his play. The difference here is that work is always amusing—there is no such thing as drudgery here."

We walked all through the village, which stretched far away into the country. The whole place hummed like a beehive on a July morning. Many sang to themselves as they went about their business, and sometimes a couple of girls, meeting in the roadway, would entwine their arms and dance a few steps together, with a kiss at parting. There was a sense of high spirits everywhere. At one place we found a

group of children sitting in the shade of some trees, while a woman of middle age told them a story. We stood awhile to listen, the woman giving us a pleasant nod as we approached. It was a story of some pleasant adventure, with nothing moral or sentimental about it, like an old folk-tale. The children were listening with unconcealed delight.

When we had walked a little further, Amroth said to me, "Come, I will give you three guesses. Who do you think, by the light of your psychology, are all these simple people?" I guessed in vain. "Well, I see I must tell you," he said. "Would it surprise you to learn that most of these people whom you see here passed upon earth for wicked and unsatisfactory characters? Yet it is true. Don't you know the kind of boys there were at school, who drifted into bad company and idle ways, mostly out of mere good-nature, went out into the world with a black mark against them, having been bullied in vain by virtu-

ous masters, the despair of their parents, always losing their employments, and often coming what we used to call social croppers—untrustworthy, sensual, feckless, no one's enemy but their own, and yet preserving through it all a kind of simple goodnature, always ready to share things with others, never knowing how to take advantage of any one, trusting the most untrustworthy people; or if they were girls, getting into trouble, losing their good name, perhaps living lives of shame in big cities —yet, for all that, guileless, affectionate, never excusing themselves, believing they had deserved anything that befell them? These were the sort of people to whom Christ was so closely drawn. They have no respectability, no conventions; they act upon instinct, never by reason, often foolishly, but seldom unkindly or selfishly. They give all they have, they never take. They have the faults of children, and the trustful affection of children. They will do anything for any one who is kind to

them and fond of them. Of course they are what is called hopeless, and they use their poor bodies very ill. In their last stages on earth they are often very deplorable objects, slinking into public-houses, plodding raggedly and dismally along high-roads, suffering cruelly and complaining little, conscious that they are universally reprobated, and not exactly knowing why. They are the victims of society; they do its dirty work, and are cast away as off-scourings. They are really youthful and often beautiful spirits, very void of offence, and needing to be treated as children. They live here in great happiness, and are conscious vaguely of the good and great intention of God towards them. They suffer in the world at the hands of cruel, selfish, and stupid people, because they are both humble and disinterested. But in all our realms I do not think there is a place of simpler and sweeter happiness than this, because they do not take their forgiveness as a right, but as a gracious and unexpected

boon. And indeed the sights and sounds of this place are the best medicine for crabbed, worldly, conventional souls, who are often brought here when they are drawing near the truth."

"Yes," I said, "this is just what I wanted. Interesting as my work has lately been, it has wanted simplicity. I have grown to consider life too much as a series of cases, and to forget that it is life itself that one must seek, and not pathology. This is the best sight I have seen, for it is so far removed from all sense of judgment. The song of the saints may be sometimes of mercy too."

XXIV

"And now," said Amroth, "that we have been refreshed by the sight of this guileless place, and as our time is running short, I am going to show you something very serious indeed. In fact, before I show it you I must remind you carefully of one thing which I shall beg you to keep in mind. There is nothing either cruel or hopeless here; all is implacably just and entirely merciful. Whatever a soul needs, that it receives; and it receives nothing that is vindictive or harsh. The ideas of punishment on earth are hopelessly confused; we do not know whether we are revenging ourselves for wrongs done to us, or safeguarding society, or deterring would-be offenders, or trying to amend and uplift the criminal. We end, as a rule, by making every one

concerned, whether punisher or punished, worse. We encourage each other in vindictiveness and hypocrisy, we cow and brutalise the transgressor. We rescue no one, we amend nothing. And yet we cannot read the clear signs of all this. The milder our methods of punishment become, the less crime is there to punish. But instead of being at once kind and severe, which is perfectly possible, we are both cruel and sentimental. Now, there is no such thing as sentiment here, just as there is no cruelty. There is emotion in full measure, and severity in full measure; no one is either pettishly frightened or mildly forgiven; and the joy that awaits us is all the more worth having, because it cannot be rashly enjoyed or reached by any short cuts; but do not forget, in what you now see, that the end is joy."

He spoke so solemnly that I was conscious of overmastering curiosity, not unmixed with awe. Again the way was abbreviated. Amroth took me by the hand

and bade me close my eyes. The breeze beat upon my face for a moment. When I opened my eyes, we were on a bare hillside, full of stones, in a kind of grey and chilly haze which filled the air. Just ahead of us were some rough enclosures of stone, overlooked by a sort of tower. They were like the big sheepfolds which I have seen on northern wolds, into which the sheep of a whole hillside can be driven for shelter. We went round the wall, which was high and strong, and came to the entrance of the tower, the door of which stood open. There seemed to be no one about, no sign of life; the only sound a curious wailing note, which came at intervals from one of the enclosures, like the crying of a prisoned beast. We went up into the tower; the staircase ended in a bare room, with four apertures, one in each wall, each leading into a kind of balcony. Amroth led the way into one of the balconies, and pointed downwards. We were looking down into one of the enclosures which lay just at our

feet, not very far below. The place was perfectly bare, and roughly flagged with stones. In the corner was a rough thatched shelter, in which was some straw. But what at once riveted my attention was the figure of a man, who half lay, half crouched upon the stones, his head in his hands, in an attitude of utter abandonment. He was dressed in a rough, weather-worn sort of cloak, and his whole appearance suggested the basest neglect; his hands were muscular and knotted; his ragged grey hair streamed over the collar of his cloak. While we looked at him, he drew himself up into a sitting posture, and turned his face blankly upon the sky. It was, or had been, a noble face enough, deeply lined, and with a look of command upon it; but anything like the hopeless and utter misery of the drawn cheeks and staring eyes I had never conceived. I involuntarily drew back, feeling that it was almost wrong to look at anything so fallen and so wretched. But Amroth detained me.

"He is not aware of us," he said, "and I desire you to look at him."

Presently the man rose wearily to his feet, and began to pace up and down round the walls, with the mechanical movements of a caged animal, avoiding the posts of the shelter without seeming to see them, and then cast himself down again upon the stones in a paroxysm of melancholy. He seemed to have no desire to escape, no energy, except to suffer. There was no hope about it all, no suggestion of prayer, nothing but blank and unadulterated suffering.

Amroth drew me back into the tower, and motioned me to the next balcony. Again I went out. The sight that I saw was almost more terrible than the first, because the prisoner here, penned in a similar enclosure, was more restless, and seemed to suffer more acutely. This was a younger man, who walked swiftly and vaguely about, casting glances up at the wall which enclosed him. Sometimes he

stopped, and seemed to be pursuing some dreadful train of solitary thought; he gesticulated, and even broke out into mutterings and cries—the cries that I had heard from without. I could not bear to look at this sight, and coming back, besought Amroth to lead me away. Amroth, who was himself, I perceived, deeply moved, and stood with lips compressed, nodded in token of assent. We went quickly down the stairway, and took our way up the hill among the stones, in silence. The shapes of similar enclosures were to be seen everywhere, and the indescribable blankness and grimness of the scene struck a chill to my heart.

From the top of the ridge we could see the same bare valleys stretching in all directions, as far as the eye could see. The only other building in sight was a great circular tower of stone, far down in the valley, from which beat the pulse of some heavy machinery, which gave the sense, I do not know how, of a ghastly and watchful life at the centre of all.

"That is the Tower of Pain," said Amroth, "and I will spare you the inner sight of that. Only our very bravest and strongest can enter there and preserve any hope. But it is well for you to know it is there, and that souls have to enter it. It is thence that all the pain of countless worlds emanates and vibrates, and the governor of the place is the most tried and bravest of all the servants of God. Thither we must go, for you shall have sight of him, though you shall not enter."

We went down the hill with all the speed we might, and, I will confess it, with the darkest dismay I have ever experienced tugging at my heart. We were soon at the foot of the enormous structure. Amroth knocked at the gate, a low door, adorned with some vague and ghastly sculptures, things like worms and huddled forms drearily intertwined. The door opened, and revealed a fiery and smouldering light within. High up in the tower a great wheel whizzed and shivered, and moving

shadows crossed and recrossed the firelit walls.

But the figure that came out to us—how shall I describe him? It was the most beautiful and gracious sight of all that I saw in my pilgrimage. He was a man of tall stature, with snow-white, silvery hair and beard, dressed in a dark cloak with a gleaming clasp of gold. But for all his age he had a look of immortal youth. His clear and piercing eye had a glance of infinite tenderness, such as I had never conceived. There were many lines upon his brow and round his eyes, but his complexion was as fresh as that of a child, and he stepped as briskly as a youth. We bowed low to him, and he reached out his hands, taking Amroth's hand and mine in each of his. His touch had a curious thrill, the hand that held mine being firm and smooth and wonderfully warm.

"Well, my children," he said in a clear, youthful voice, "I am glad to see you, because there are few who come hither will-

ingly; and the old and weary are cheered by the sight of those that are young and strong. Amroth I know. But who are you, my child? You have not been among us long. Have you found your work and place here yet?" I told him my story in a few words, and he smiled indulgently. "There is nothing like being at work," he said. "Even my business here, which seems sad enough to most people, must be done; and I do it very willingly. Do not be frightened, my child," he said to me suddenly, drawing me nearer to him, and folding my arm beneath his own. "It is only on earth that we are frightened of pain; it spoils our poor plans, it makes us fretful and miserable, it brings us into the shadow of death. But for all that, as Amroth knows, it is the best and most fruitful of all the works that the Father does for man, and the thing dearest to His heart. We cannot prosper till we suffer, and suffering leads us very swiftly into joy and peace. Indeed this Tower of Pain, as it is

called, is in fact nothing but the Tower of Love. Not until love is touched with pain does it become beautiful, and the joy that comes through pain is the only real thing in the world. Of course, when my great engine here sends a thrill into a careless life, it comes as a dark surprise; but then follow courage and patience and wonder, and all the dear tendance of Love. I have borne it all myself a hundred times, and I shall bear it again if the Father wills it. But when you leave me here, do not think of me as of one who works, grim and indifferent, wrecking lives and destroying homes. It is but the burning of the weeds of life; and it is as needful as the sunshine and the rain. Pain does not wander aimlessly, smiting down by mischance and by accident; it comes as the close and dear intention of the Father's heart, and is to a man as a trumpet-call from the land of life, not as a knell from the land of death. And now, dear children, you must leave me, for I have much to do. And I will give

you," he added, turning to me, "a gift which shall be your comfort, and a token that you have been here, and seen the worst and the best that there is to see."

He drew from under his cloak a ring, a circlet of gold holding a red stone with a flaming heart, and put it on my finger. There pierced through me a pang intenser than any I had ever experienced, in which all the love and sorrow I had ever known seemed to be suddenly mingled, and which left behind it a perfect and intense sense of joy.

"There, that is my gift," he said, "and you shall have an old man's loving blessing too, for it is that, after all, that I live for." He drew me to him and kissed me on the brow, and in a moment he was gone.

We walked away in silence, and for my part with an elation of spirit which I could hardly control, a desire to love and suffer, and do and be all that the mind of man could conceive. But my heart was too full to speak.

"Come," said Amroth presently, "you are not as grateful as I had hoped—you are outgrowing me! Come down to my poor level for an instant, and beware of spiritual pride!" Then altering his tone he said, "Ah, yes, dear friend, I understand. There is nothing in the world like it, and you were most graciously and tenderly received—but the end is not yet."

"Amroth," I said, "I am like one intoxicated with joy. I feel that I could endure anything and never make question of anything again. How infinitely good he was to me—like a dear father!"

"Yes," said Amroth, "he is very like the Father"—and he smiled at me a mysterious smile.

"Amroth," I said, bewildered, "you cannot mean——?"

"No, I mean nothing," said Amroth, "but you have to-day looked very far into the truth, farther than is given to many so soon; but you are a child of fortune, and

seem to please every one. I declare that a little more would make me jealous."

Presently, catching sight of one of the enclosures hard by, I said to Amroth, "But there are some questions I must ask. What has just happened had put it mostly out of my head. Those poor suffering souls that we saw just now—it is well, with them, I am sure, so near the Master of the Tower—he does not forget them, I am sure—but who are they, and what have they done to suffer so?"

"I will tell you," said Amroth, "for it is a dark business. Those two that you have seen—well, you will know one of them by name and fame, and of the other you may have heard. The first, that old shaggy-haired man, who lay upon the stones, that was——"

He mentioned a name that was notorious in Europe at the time of my life on earth, though he was then long dead; a ruthless and ambitious conqueror, who poured a cataract of life away, in wars, for his own

aggrandisement. Then he mentioned another name, a statesman who pursued a policy of terrorism and oppression, enriched himself by barbarous cruelty exercised in colonial possessions, and was famous for the calculated libertinism of his private life.

"They were great sinners," said Amroth, "and the sorrows they made and flung so carelessly about them, beat back upon them now in a surge of pain. These men were strangely affected, each of them, by the smallest sight or sound of suffering—a tortured animal, a crying child; and yet they were utterly ruthless of the pain that they did not see. It was a lack, no doubt, of the imagination of which I spoke, and which makes all the difference. And now they have to contemplate the pain which they could not imagine; and they have to learn submission and humility. It is a terrible business in a way—the loneliness of it! There used to be an old saying that the strongest man was the man that was most

alone. But it was just because these men practised loneliness on earth that they have to suffer so. They used others as counters in a game, they had neither friend nor beloved, except for their own pleasure. They depended upon no one, needed no one, desired no one. But there are many others here who did the same on a small scale—selfish fathers and mothers who made homes miserable; boys who were bullies at school and tyrants in the world, in offices, and places of authority. This is the place of discipline for all base selfishness and vile authority, for all who have oppressed and victimised mankind."

"But," I said, "here is my difficulty. I understand the case of the oppressors well enough; but about the oppressed, what is the justice of that? Is there not a fortuitous element there, an interruption of the Divine plan? Take the case of the thousands of lives wasted by some brutal conqueror. Are souls sent into the world for that, to be driven in gangs, made to fight,

let us say, for some abominable cause, and then recklessly dismissed from life?"

"Ah," said Amroth, "you make too much of the dignity of life! You do not know how small a thing a single life is, not as regards the life of mankind, but in the life of one individual. Of course if a man had but one single life on earth, it would be an intolerable injustice; and that is the factor which sets all straight, the factor which most of us, in our time of bodily self-importance, overlook. These oppressors have no power over other lives except what God allows, and bewildered humanity concedes. Not only is the great plan whole in the mind of God, but every single minutest life is considered as well. In the very case you spoke of, the little conscript, torn from his home to fight a tyrant's battles, hectored and ill-treated, and then shot down upon some crowded battle-field, that is precisely the discipline which at that point of time his soul needs, and the blessedness of which he afterwards perceives; sometimes dis-

cipline is swift and urgent, sometimes it is slow and lingering: but all experience is exactly apportioned to the quality of which each soul is in need. The only reason why there seems to be an element of chance in it, is that the whole thing is so inconceivably vast and prolonged; and our happiness and our progress alike depend upon our realising at every moment that the smallest joy and the most trifling pleasure, as well as the tiniest ailment or the most subtle sorrow, are just the pieces of experience which we are meant at that moment to use and make our own. No one, not even God, can force us to understand this; we have to perceive it for ourselves, and to live in the knowledge of it."

"Yes," I said, "it is true, all that. My heart tells me so; but it is very wonderful and mysterious, all the same. But, Amroth, I have seen and heard enough. My spirit desires with all its might to be at its own work, hastening on the mighty end.

Now, I can hold no more of wonders. Let me return."

"Yes," said Amroth, "you are right! These wonders are so familiar to me that I forget, perhaps, the shock with which they come to minds unused to them. Yet there are other things which you must assuredly see, when the time comes; but I must not let you bite off a larger piece than you can swallow."

He took me by the hand; the breeze passed through my hair; and in an instant we were back at the fortress-gate, and I entered the beloved shelter, with a grateful sense that I was returning home.

XXV

I RETURNED, as I said, with a sense of serene pleasure and security to my work; but that serenity did not last long. What I had seen with Amroth, on that day of wandering, filled me with a strange restlessness, and a yearning for I knew not what. I plunged into my studies with determination rather than ardour, and I set myself to study what is the most difficult problem of all—the exact limits of individual responsibility. I had many conversations on the point with one of my teachers, a young man of very wide experience, who combined in an unusual way a close scientific knowledge of the subject with a peculiar emotional sympathy. He told me once that it was the best outfit for the scientific study of these problems, when the heart anticipated the slower judgment

of the mind, and set the mind a goal, so to speak, to work up to; though he warned me that the danger was that the mind was often reluctant to abandon the more indulgent claims of the heart; and he advised me to mistrust alike scientific conclusions and emotional inferences.

I had a very memorable conversation with him on the particular question of responsibility, which I will here give.

"The mistake," I said to him, "of human moralists seems to me to be, that they treat all men as more or less equal in the matter of moral responsibility. How often," I added, "have I heard a school preacher tell boys that they could not all be athletic or clever or popular, but that high principle and moral courage were things within the reach of all. Whereas the more that I studied human nature, the more did the power of surveying and judging one's own moral progress, and the power of enforcing and executing the dictates of the conscience, seem to me faculties, like other

faculties. Indeed, it appears to me," I said, "that on the one hand there are people who have a power of moral discrimination, when dealing with the retrospect of their actions, but no power of obeying the claims of principle, when confronted with a situation involving moral strain; while on the other hand there seem to me to be some few men with a great and resolute power of will, capable of swift decision and firm action, but without any instinct for morality at all."

"Yes," he said, "you are quite right. The moral sense is in reality a high artistic sense. It is a power of discerning and being attracted by the beauty of moral action, just as the artist is attracted by form and colour, and the musician by delicate combinations of harmonies and the exquisite balance of sound. You know," he said, "what a suspension is in music—it is a chord which in itself is a discord, but which depends for its beauty on some impending resolution. It is just so with moral choice.

The imagination plays a great part in it. The man whose morality is high and profound sees instinctively the approaching contingency, and his act of self-denial or self-forgetfulness depends for its force upon the way in which it will ultimately combine with other issues involved, even though at the moment that act may seem to be unnecessary and even perverse."

"But," I said, "there are a good many people who attain to a sensible, well-balanced kind of temperance, after perhaps a few failures, from a purely prudential motive. What is the worth of that?"

"Very small indeed," said my teacher. "In fact, the prudential morality, based on motives of health and reputation and success, is a thing that has often to be deliberately unlearnt at a later stage. The strange catastrophes which one sees so often in human life, where a man by one act of rashness, or moral folly, upsets the tranquil tenor of his life—a desperate love-affair, a passion of unreasonable anger, a

piece of quixotic generosity—are often a symptom of a great effort of the soul to free itself from prudential considerations. A good thing done for a low motive has often a singularly degrading and deforming influence on the soul. One has to remember how terribly the heavenly values are obscured upon earth by the body, its needs and its desires; and current morality of a cautious and sensible kind is often worse than worthless, because it produces a kind of self-satisfaction, which is the hardest thing to overcome."

"But," I said, "in the lives of some of the greatest moralists, one so often sees, or at all events hears it said, that their morality is useless because it is unpractical, too much out of the reach of the ordinary man, too contemptuous of simple human faculties. What is one to make of that?"

"It is a difficult matter," he replied; "one does indeed, in the lives of great moralists, see sometimes that their work

is vitiated by perverse and fantastic preferences, which they exalt out of all proportion to their real value. But for all that, it is better to be on the side of the saints; for they are gifted with the sort of instinctive appreciation of the beauty of high morality of which I spoke. Unselfishness, purity, peacefulness seem to them so beautiful and desirable that they are constrained to practise them. While controversy, bitterness, cruelty, meanness, vice, seem so utterly ugly and repulsive that they cannot for an instant entertain even so much as a thought of them."

"But if a man sees that he is wanting in this kind of perception," I said, "what can he do? How is he to learn to love what he does not admire and to abhor what he does not hate? It all seems so fatalistic, so irresistible."

"If he discerns his lack," said my teacher with a smile, "he is probably not so very far from the truth. The germ of the sense of moral beauty is there, and it only wants

patience and endeavour to make it grow. But it cannot be all done in any single life, of course; that is where the human faith fails, in its limitations of a man's possibilities to a single life."

"But what is the reason," I said, "why the morality, the high austerity of some persons, who are indubitably high-minded and pure-hearted, is so utterly discouraging and even repellent?"

"Ah," he said, "there you touch on a great truth. The reason of that is that these have but a sterile sort of connoisseurship in virtue. Virtue cannot be attained in solitude, nor can it be made a matter of private enjoyment. The point is, of course, that it is not enough for a man to be himself; he must also give himself; and if a man is moral because of the delicate pleasure it brings him—and the artistic pleasure of asceticism is a very high one—he is apt to find himself here in very strange and distasteful company. In this, as in everything, the only safe motive is

the motive of love. The man who takes pleasure in using influence, or setting a lofty example, is just as arid a dilettante as the musician who plays, or the artist who paints, for the sake of the applause and the admiration he wins; he is only regarding others as so many instruments for registering his own level of complacency. Every one, even the least complicated of mankind, must know the exquisite pleasure that comes from doing the simplest and humblest service to one whom he loves; how such love converts the most menial office into a luxurious joy; and the higher that a man goes, the more does he discern in every single human being with whom he is brought into contact a soul whom he can love and serve. Of course it is but an elementary pleasure to enjoy pleasing those whom we regard with some passion of affection, wife or child or friend, because, after all, one gains something oneself by that. But the purest morality of all discerns the infinitely lovable quality which

is in the depth of every human soul, and lavishes its tenderness and its grace upon it, with a compassion that grows and increases, the more unthankful and clumsy and brutish is the soul which it sets out to serve."

"But," I said, "beautiful as that thought is—and I see and recognise its beauty—it does limit the individual responsibility very greatly. Surely a prudential morality, the morality which is just because it fears reprisal, and is kind because it anticipates kindness, is better than none at all? The morality of which you speak can only belong to the noblest human creatures."

"Only to the noblest," he said; "and I must repeat what I said before, that the prudential morality is useless, because it begins at the wrong end, and is set upon self throughout. I must say deliberately that the soul which loves unreasonably and unwisely, which even yields itself to the passion of others for the pleasure it gives rather than for the pleasure it receives—

the thriftless, lavish, good-natured, affectionate people, who are said to make such a mess of their lives—are far higher in the scale of hope than the cautiously respectable, the prudently kind, the selfishly pure. There must be no mistake about this. One must somehow or other give one's heart away, and it is better to do it in error and disaster than to treasure it for oneself. Of course there are many lives on earth—and an increasing number as the world develops—which are generous and noble and unselfish, without any sacrifice of purity or self-respect. But the essence of morality is giving, and not receiving, or even practising; the point is free choice, and not compulsion; and if one cannot give *because* one loves, one must give *until* one loves."

XXVI

But all my speculations were cut short by a strange event which happened about this time. One day, without any warning, the thought of Cynthia darted urgently and irresistibly into my mind. Her image came between me and all my tasks; I saw her in innumerable positions and guises, but always with her eyes bent on me in a pitiful entreaty. After endeavouring to resist the thought for a little as some kind of fantasy, I became suddenly convinced that she was in need of me, and in urgent need. I asked for an interview with our Master, and told him the story; he heard me gravely, and then said that I might go in search of her; but I was not sure that he was wholly pleased, and he bent his eyes upon me with a very inquiring look. I hesitated whether or not to call Amroth to my aid, but decided that

I had better not do so at first. The question was how to find her; the great crags lay between me and the land of delight; and when I hurried out of the college, the thought of the descent and its dangers fairly unmanned me. I knew, however, of no other way. But what was my surprise when, on arriving at the top, not far from the point where Amroth had greeted me after the ascent, I saw a little steep path, which wound itself down into the gulleys and chimneys of the black rocks. I took it without hesitation, and though again and again it seemed to come to an end in front of me, I found that it could be traced and followed without serious difficulty. The descent was accomplished with a singular rapidity, and I marvelled to find myself at the crag-base in so brief a time, considering the intolerable tedium of the ascent. I rapidly crossed the intervening valley, and was very soon at the gate of the careless land. To my intense joy, and not at all to my surprise, I found Cynthia at the gate

itself, waiting for me with a look of expectancy. She came forwards, and threw herself passionately into my arms, murmuring words of delight and welcome, like a child.

"I knew you would come," she said. "I am frightened—all sorts of dreadful things have happened. I have found out where I am—and I seem to have lost all my friends. Charmides is gone, and Lucius is cruel to me—he tells me that I have lost my spirits and my good looks, and am tiresome company."

I looked at her—she was paler and frailer-looking than when I left her; and she was habited very differently, in simpler and graver dress. But she was to my eyes infinitely more beautiful and dearer, and I told her so. She smiled at that, but half tearfully; and we seated ourselves on a bench hard by, looking over the garden, which was strangely and luxuriantly beautiful.

"You must take me away with you at once," she said. "I cannot live here without

you. I thought at first, when you went, that it was rather a relief not to have your grave face at my shoulder,"—here she took my face in her hands—"always reminding me of something I did not want, and ought to have wanted—but oh, how I began to miss you! and then I got so tired of this silly, lazy place, and all the music and jokes and compliments. But I am a worthless creature, and not good for anything. I cannot work, and I hate being idle. Take me anywhere, *make* me do something, beat me if you like, only force me to be different from what I am."

"Very well," I said. "I will give you a good beating presently, of course, but just let me consider what will hurt you most, silly child!"

"That is it," she said. "I want to be hurt and bruised, and shaken as my nurse used to shake me, when I was a naughty child. Oh dear, oh dear, how wretched I am!" and poor Cynthia laid her head on my shoulder and burst into tears.

"Come, come," I said, "you must not do that—I want my wits about me; but if you cry, you will simply make a fool of me—and this is no time for love-making."

"Then you do really *care*," said Cynthia in a quieter tone. "That is all I want to know! I want to be with you, and see you every hour and every minute. I can't help saying it, though it is really very undignified for me to be making love to you. I did many silly things on earth, but never anything quite so feeble as that!"

I felt myself fairly bewildered by the situation. My psychology did not seem to help me; and here at least was something to love and rescue. I will say frankly that, in my stupidity and superiority, I did not really think of loving Cynthia in the way in which she needed to be loved. She was to me, with all my grave concerns and problems, as a charming and intelligent child, with whom I could not even speak of half the thoughts which absorbed me. So I just held her in my arms, and comforted her as

best I could; but what to do and where to bestow her I could not tell. I saw that her time to leave the place of desire had come, but what she could turn to I could not conceive.

Suddenly I looked up, and saw Lucius approaching, evidently in a very angry mood.

"So this is the end of all our amusement?" he said, as he came near. "You bring Cynthia here in your tiresome, condescending way, you live among us like an almighty prig, smiling gravely at our fun, and then you go off when it is convenient to yourself; and then, when you want a little recreation, you come and sit here in a corner and hug your darling, when you have never given her a thought of late. You *know* that is true," he added menacingly.

"Yes," I said, "it is true! I went of my own will, and I have come back of my own will; and you have all been out of my thoughts, because I have had much work to do. But what of that? Cynthia

wants me and I have come back to her, and I will do whatever she desires. It is no good threatening me, Lucius—there is nothing you can do or say that will have the smallest effect on me."

"We will see about that," said Lucius. "None of your airs here! We are peaceful enough when we are respectfully and fairly treated, but we have our own laws, and no one shall break them with impunity. We will have no half-hearted fools here. If you come among us with your damned missionary airs, you shall have what I expect you call the crown of martyrdom."

He whistled loud and shrill. Half-a-dozen men sprang from the bushes and flung themselves upon me. I struggled, but was overpowered, and dragged away. The last sight I had was of Lucius standing with a disdainful smile, with Cynthia clinging to his arm; and to my horror and disgust she was smiling too.

XXVII

I HAD somehow never expected to be used with positive violence in the world of spirits, and least of all in that lazy and good-natured place. Considering, too, the errand on which I had come, not for my own convenience but for the sake of another, my treatment seemed to me very hard. What was still more humiliating was the fact that my spirit seemed just as powerless in the hands of these ruffians as my body would have been on earth. I was pushed, hustled, insulted, hurt. I could have summoned Amroth to my aid, but I felt too proud for that; yet the thought of the crag-men, and the possibility of the second death, did visit my mind with dismal iteration. I did not at all desire a further death; I felt very much alive, and

full of interest and energy. Worst of all was my sense that Cynthia had gone over to the enemy. I had been so loftily kind with her, that I much resented having appeared in her sight as feeble and ridiculous. It is difficult to preserve any dignity of demeanour or thought, with a man's hand at one's neck and his knee in one's back: and I felt that Lucius had displayed a really Satanical malignity in using this particular means of degrading me in Cynthia's sight, and of regaining his own lost influence.

I was thrust and driven before my captors along an alley in the garden, and what added to my discomfiture was that a good many people ran together to see us pass, and watched me with decided amusement. I was taken finally to a little pavilion of stone, with heavily barred windows, and a flagged marble floor. The room was absolutely bare, and contained neither seat nor table. Into this I was thrust, with some obscene jesting, and the door was locked upon me.

The time passed very heavily. At intervals I heard music burst out among the alleys, and a good many people came to peep in upon me with an amused curiosity. I was entirely bewildered by my position, and did not see what I could have done to have incurred my punishment. But in the solitary hours that followed I began to have a suspicion of my fault. I had found myself hitherto the object of so much attention and praise, that I had developed a strong sense of complacency and self-satisfaction. I had an uncomfortable suspicion that there was even more behind, but I could not, by interrogating my mind and searching out my spirits, make out clearly what it was; yet I felt I was having a sharp lesson; and this made me resolve that I would ask for no kind of assistance from Amroth or any other power, but that I would try to meet whatever fell upon me with patience, and extract the full savour of my experience.

I do not know how long I spent in the

dismal cell. I was in some discomfort from the handling I had received, and in still greater dejection of mind. Suddenly I heard footsteps approaching. Three of my captors appeared, and told me roughly to go with them. So, a pitiable figure, I limped along between two of them, the third following behind, and was conducted through the central piazza of the place, between two lines of people who gave way to the most undisguised merriment, and even shouted opprobrious remarks at me, calling me spy and traitor and other unpleasant names. I could not have believed that these kind-mannered and courteous persons could have exhibited, all of a sudden, such frank brutality, and I saw many of my own acquaintance among them, who regarded me with obvious derision.

I was taken into a big hall, in which I had often sat to hear a concert of music. On the dais at the upper end were seated a number of dignified persons, in a semicircle, with a very handsome and stately

old man in the centre on a chair of state, whose face was new to me. Before this Court I was formally arraigned; I had to stand alone in the middle of the floor, in an open space. Two of my captors stood on each side of me; while the rest of the court was densely packed with people, who greeted me with obvious hostility.

When silence was procured, the President said to me, with a show of great courtesy, that he could not disguise from himself that the charge against me was a serious one; but that justice would be done to me, fully and carefully. I should have ample opportunity to excuse myself. He then called upon one of those who sat with him to state the case briefly, and call witnesses; and after that he promised I might speak for myself.

A man rose from one of the seats, and, pleading somewhat rhetorically, said that the object of the great community, to which so many were proud to belong, was to secure to all the utmost amount of innocent

enjoyment, and the most entire peace of mind; that no pressure was put upon any one who decided to stay there, and to observe the quiet customs of the place; but that it was always considered a heinous and ill-disposed thing to attempt to unsettle any one's convictions, or to attempt, by using undue influence, to bring about the migration of any citizen to conditions of which little was known, but which there was reason to believe were distinctly undesirable.

"We are, above all," he said, "a religious community; our rites and our ceremonies are privileges open to all; we compel no one to attend them; all that we insist is that no one, by restless innovation or cynical contempt, should attempt to disturb the emotions of serene contemplation, distinguished courtesy, and artistic feeling, for which our society has been so long and justly celebrated."

This was received with loud applause, indulgently checked by the President. Some

witnesses were then called, who testified to the indifference and restlessness which I had on many occasions manifested. It was brought up against me that I had provoked a much-respected member of the community, Charmides, to utter some very treasonous and unpleasant language, and that it was believed that the rash and unhappy step, which he had lately taken, of leaving the place, had been entirely or mainly the result of my discontented and ill-advised suggestion.

Then Lucius himself, wearing an air of extreme gravity and even despondency, was called, and a murmur of sympathy ran through the audience. Lucius, apparently struggling with deep emotion, said that he bore me no actual ill-will; that on my first arrival he had done his best to welcome me and make me feel at home; that it was probably known to all that I had been accompanied by an accomplished and justly popular lady, whom I had openly treated with scanty civility and undisguised con-

tempt. That he had himself, under the laws of the place, contracted a close alliance with my unhappy protégée, and that their union had been duly accredited; but that I had lost no opportunity of attempting to undermine his happiness, and to maintain an unwholesome influence over her. That I had at last left the place myself, with a most uncivil abruptness; during the interval of absence my occupations were believed to have been of the most dubious character: it was more than suspected, indeed, that I had penetrated to places, the very name of which could hardly be mentioned without shame and consternation. That my associates had been persons of the vilest character and the most brutal antecedents; and at last, feeling in need of distraction, I had again returned with the deliberate intention of seducing his unhappy partner into accompanying me to one or other of the abandoned places I had visited. He added that Cynthia had been so much overcome by her emotion, and her natural compas-

sion for an old acquaintance, that he had persuaded her not to subject herself to the painful strain of an appearance in public; but that for this action he threw himself upon the mercy of the Court, who would know that it was only dictated by chivalrous motives.

At this there was subdued applause, and Lucius, after adding a few broken words to the effect that he lived only for the maintenance of order, peace, and happiness, and that he was devoted heart and soul to the best interests of the community, completely broke down, and was assisted from his place by friends.

The whole thing was so malignant and ingenious a travesty of what had happened, that I was entirely at a loss to know what to say. The President, however, courteously intimated that though the case appeared to present a good many very unsatisfactory features, yet I was entirely at liberty to justify myself if I could, and, if not, to make submission; and added that

I should be dealt with as leniently as possible.

I summoned up my courage as well as I might. I began by saying that I claimed no more than the liberty of thought and action which I knew the Court desired to concede. I said that my arrival at the place was mysterious even to myself, and that I had simply acted under orders in accompanying Cynthia, and in seeing that she was securely bestowed. I said that I had never incited any rebellion, or any disobedience to laws of the scope of which I had never been informed. That I had indeed frankly discussed matters of general interest with any citizen who seemed to desire it; that I had been always treated with marked consideration and courtesy; and that, as far as I was aware, I had always followed the same policy myself. I said that I was sincerely attached to Cynthia, but added that, with all due respect, I could no longer consider myself a member of the community. I had transferred my-

self elsewhere under direct orders, with my own entire concurrence, and that I had since acted in accordance with the customs and regulations of the community to which I had been allotted. I went on to say that I had returned under the impression that my presence was desired by Cynthia, and that I must protest with all my power against the treatment I had received. I had been arrested and imprisoned with much violence and contumely, without having had any opportunity of hearing what my offence was supposed to have been, or having had any semblance of a trial, and that I could not consider that my usage had been consistent with the theory of courtesy, order, or justice so eloquently described by the President.

This onslaught of mine produced an obvious revulsion in my favour. The President conferred hastily with his colleagues, and then said that my arrest had indeed been made upon the information of Lucius, and with the cognisance of the Court; but

that he sincerely regretted that I had any complaint of unhandsome usage to make, and that the matter would be certainly inquired into. He then added that he understood from my words that I desired to make a complete submission, and that in that case I should be acquitted of any evil intentions. My fault appeared to be that I had yielded too easily to the promptings of an ill-balanced and speculative disposition, and that if I would undertake to disturb no longer the peace of the place, and to desist from all further tampering with the domestic happiness of a much-respected pair, I should be discharged with a caution, and indeed be admitted again to the privileges of orderly residence.

"And I will undertake to say," he added, "that the kindness and courtesy of our community will overlook your fault, and make no further reference to a course of conduct which appears to have been misguided rather than deliberately malevolent. We have every desire not to disturb in any

way the tranquillity which it is, above all things, our desire to maintain. May I conclude, then, that this is your intention?"

"No, sir," I said, "certainly not! With all due respect to the Court, I cannot submit to the jurisdiction. The only privilege I claim is the privilege of an alien and a stranger, who in a perfectly peaceful manner, and with no seditious intent, has reentered this land, and has thereupon been treated with gross and unjust violence. I do not for a moment contest the right of this community to make its own laws and regulations, but I do contest its right to fetter the thought and the liberty of speech of all who enter it. I make no submission. The Lady Cynthia came here under my protection, and if any undue influence has been used, it has been used by Lucius, whom I treated with a confidence he has abused. And I here appeal to a higher power and a higher court, which may indeed permit this unhappy community to make its own

regulations, but will not permit any gross violation of elementary justice."

I was carried away by great indignation in the course of my words, which had a very startling effect. A large number of the audience left the hall in haste. The judge grew white to the lips, whether with anger or fear I did not know, said a few words to his neighbour, and then with a great effort to control himself, said to me:

"You put us, sir, by your words, in a very painful position. You do not know the conditions under which we live—that is evident—and intemperate language like yours has before now provoked an invasion of our peace of a most undesirable kind. I entreat you to calm yourself, to accept the apologies of the Court for the incidental and indeed unjustifiable violence with which you were treated. If you will only return to your own community, the nature of which I will not now stay to inquire, you may be assured that you will be conducted to our gates with the utmost honour. Will you

pledge yourself as a gentleman, and, as I believe I am right in saying, as a Christian, to do this?"

"Yes," I said, "upon one condition: that I may have an interview with the Lady Cynthia, and that she may be free to accompany me, if she wishes."

The President was about to reply, when a sudden and unlooked-for interruption occurred. A man in a pearly-grey dress, with a cloak clasped with gold, came in at the end of the hall, and advanced with rapid steps and a curiously unconcerned air up the hall. The judges rose in their places with a hurried and disconcerted look. The stranger came up to me, tapped me on the shoulder, and bade me presently follow him. Then he turned to the President, and said in a clear, peremptory voice:

"Dissolve the Court! Your powers have been grossly and insolently exceeded. See that nothing of this sort occurs again!" and then, ascending the dais, he struck the President with his open hand hard upon the cheek.

The President gave a stifled cry and staggered in his place, and then, covering his face with his hands, went out at a door on the platform, followed by the rest of the Council in haste. Then the man came down again, and motioned me to follow him. I was not prepared for what happened. Outside in the square was a great, pale, silent crowd, in the most obvious and dreadful excitement and consternation. We went rapidly, in absolute stillness, through two lines of people, who watched us with an emotion I could not quite interpret, but it was something very like hatred.

"Follow me quickly," said my guide; "do not look round!" and, as we went, I heard the crowd closing up in a menacing way behind us. But we walked straight forward, neither slowly nor hurriedly but at a deliberate pace, to the gateway which opened on the cliffs. At this point I saw a confusion in the crowd, as though some one were being kept back, and in the forefront of the throng, gesticulating and argu-

ing, was Lucius himself, with his back to us. Just as we reached the gate I heard a cry; and from the crowd there ran Cynthia, with her hair unbound, in terror and faintness. Our guide opened the gate, and motioned us swiftly through, turning round to face the crowd, which now ran in upon us. I saw him wave his arm; and then he came quickly through the gate and closed it. He looked at us with a smile. "Don't be afraid," he said; "that was a dangerous business. But they cannot touch us here." As he said the word, there burst from the gardens behind us a storm of the most hideous and horrible cries I had ever heard, like the howling of wild beasts. Cynthia clung to me in terror, and nearly swooned in my arms. "Never mind," said the guide; "they are disappointed, and no wonder. It was a near thing; but, poor creatures, they have no initiative; their life is not a fortifying one; and besides, they will have forgotten all about it to-morrow. But we had better not stop here. There is

no use in facing disagreeable things, unless one is obliged." And he led the way down the valley.

When we had got a little farther off, our guide told us to sit down and rest. Cynthia was still very much frightened, speechless with excitement and agitation, and, like all impulsive people, regretting her decision. I saw that it was useless to say anything to her at present. She sat wearily enough, her eyes closed, and her hands clasped. Our guide looked at me with a half-smile, and said:

"That was rather an unpleasant business! It is astonishing how excited those placid and polite people can get if they think their privileges are being threatened. But really that Court was rather too much. They have tried it before with some success, and it is a clever trick. But they have had a lesson to-day, and it will not need to be repeated for a while."

"You arrived just at the right moment," I said, "and I really cannot express how grateful I am to you for your help."

"Oh," he said, "you were quite safe. It was just that touch of temper that saved you; but I was hard by all the time, to see that things did not go too far."

"May I ask," I said, "exactly what they could have done to me, and what their real power is?"

"They have none at all," he said. "They could not really have done anything to you, except imprison you. What helps them is not their own power, which is nothing, but the terror of their victims. If you had not been frightened when you were first attacked, they could not have overpowered you. It is all a kind of play-acting, which they perform with remarkable skill. The Court was really an admirable piece of drama—they have a great gift for representation."

"Do you mean to say," I said, "that they were actually aware that they had no sort of power to inflict any injury upon me?"

"They could have made it very disagreeable for you," he said, "if they had fright-

ened you, and kept you frightened. As long as that lasted, you would have been extremely uncomfortable. But as you saw, the moment you defied them they were helpless. The part played by Lucius was really unpardonable. I am afraid he is a great rascal."

Cynthia faintly demurred to this. "Never mind," said the guide soothingly, "he has only shown you his good side, of course; and I don't deny that he is a very clever and attractive fellow. But he makes no progress, and I am really afraid that he will have to be transferred elsewhere; though there is indeed one hope for him."

"Tell me what that is," said Cynthia faintly.

"I don't think I need do that," said our friend, "you know better than I; and some day, I think, when you are stronger, you will find the way to release him."

"Ah, you don't know him as I do," said Cynthia, and relapsed into silence; but did not withdraw her hand from mine.

"Well," said our guide after a moment's pause, "I think I have done all I can for the time being, and I am wanted elsewhere."

"But will you not advise me what to do next?" I said. "I do not see my way clear."

"No," said the guide rather drily, "I am afraid I cannot do that. That lies outside my province. These delicate questions are not in my line. I will tell you plainly what I am. I am just a messenger, perhaps more like a policeman," he added, smiling, "than anything else. I just go and appear when I am wanted, if there is a row or a chance of one. Don't misunderstand me!" he said more kindly. "It is not from any lack of interest in you or our friend here. I should very much like to know what step you will take, but it is simply not my business: our duties here are very clearly defined, and I can just do my job, and nothing more."

He made a courteous salute, and walked off without looking back, leaving on me the

impression of a young military officer, perfectly courteous and reliable, not inclined to cultivate his emotions or to waste words, but absolutely effective, courageous, and dutiful.

"Well," I said to Cynthia with a show of cheerfulness, "what shall we do next? Are you feeling strong enough to go on?"

"I am sure I don't know," said Cynthia wearily. "Don't ask me. I have had a great fright, and I begin to wish I had stayed behind. How uncomfortable everything is! Why can one never have a moment's peace? There," she said to me, "don't be vexed, I am not blaming you; but I hated you for not showing more fight when those men set on you, and I hated Lucius for having done it; you must forgive me! I am sure you only did what was kind and right—but I have had a very trying time, and I don't like these bothers. Let me alone for a little, and I daresay I shall be more sensible."

I sat by her in much perplexity, feeling

singularly helpless and ineffective; and in a moment of weakness, not knowing what to do, I wished that Amroth were near me, to advise me; and to my relief saw him approaching, but also realised in a flash that I had acted wrongly, and that he was angry, as I had never seen him before.

He came up to us, and bending down to Cynthia with great tenderness, took her hand, and said, "Will you stay here quietly a little, Cynthia, and rest? You are perfectly safe now, and no one will come near you. We two shall be close at hand; but we must have a talk together, and see what can be done."

Cynthia smiled and released me. Amroth beckoned me to withdraw with him. When we had got out of earshot, he turned upon me very fiercely, and said, "You have made a great mess of this business."

"I know it," I said feebly, "but I cannot for the life of me see where I was wrong."

"You were wrong from beginning to

end," he said. "Cannot you see that, whatever this place is, it is not a sentimental place? It is all this wretched sentiment that has done the mischief. Come," he added, "I have an unpleasant task before me, to unmask you to yourself. I don't like it, but I must do it. Don't make it harder for me."

"Very good," I said, rather angrily too. "But allow me to say this first. This is a place of muddle. One is worked too hard, and shown too many things, till one is hopelessly confused. But I had rather have your criticism first, and then I will make mine."

"Very well!" said Amroth facing me, looking at me fixedly with his blue eyes, and his nostrils a little distended. "The mischief lies in your temperament. You are precocious, and you are volatile. You have had special opportunities, and in a way you have used them well, but your head has been somewhat turned by your successes. You came to that place yonder,

with Cynthia, with a sense of superiority. You thought yourself too good for it, and instead of just trying to see into the minds and hearts of the people you met, you despised them; instead of learning, you tried to teach. You took a feeble interest in Cynthia, made a pet of her; then, when I took you away, you forgot all about her. Even the great things I was allowed to show you did not make you humble. You took them as a compliment to your powers. And so when you had your chance to go back to help Cynthia, you thought out no plan, you asked no advice. You went down in a very self-sufficient mood, expecting that everything would be easy."

"That is not true," I said. "I was very much perplexed."

"It is only too true," said Amroth; "you enjoyed your perplexity; I daresay you called it faith to yourself! It was that which made you weak. You lost your temper with Lucius, you made a miserable fight of it—and even in prison you could

not recognise that you were in fault. You did better at the trial—I fully admit that you behaved well there—but the fault is in this, that this girl gave you her heart and her confidence, and you despised them. Your mind was taken up with other things; a very little more, and you would be fit for the intellectual paradise. There," he said, "I have nearly done! You may be angry if you will, but that is the truth. You have a wrong idea of this place. It is not plain sailing here. Life here is a very serious, very intricate, very difficult business. The only complications which are removed are the complications of the body; but one has anxious and trying responsibilities all the same, and you have trifled with them. You must not delude yourself. You have many good qualities. You have some courage, much ingenuity, keen interests, and a good deal of conscientiousness; but you have the makings of a dilettante, the readiness to delude yourself that the particular little work you are engaged in is excessively and

peculiarly important. You have got the proportion all wrong."

I had a feeling of intense anger and bitterness at all this; but as he spoke, the scales seemed to fall from my eyes, and I saw that Amroth was right. I wrestled with myself in silence.

Presently I said, "Amroth, I believe you are right, though I think at this moment that you have stated all this rather harshly. But I do see that it can be no pleasure to you to state it, though I fear I shall never regain my pleasure in your company."

"There," said Amroth, "that is sentiment again!"

This put me into a great passion.

"Very well," I said, "I will say no more. Perhaps you will just be good enough to tell me what I am to do with Cynthia, and where I am to go, and then I will trouble you no longer."

"Oh," said Amroth with a sneer, "I have no doubt you can find some very nice semi-detached villas hereabouts. Why not set-

tle down, and make the poor girl a little more worthy of yourself?"

At this I turned from him in great anger, and left him standing where he was. If ever I hated any one, I hated Amroth at that moment. I went back to Cynthia.

"I have come back to you, dear," I said. "Can you trust me and go with me? No one here seems inclined to help us, and we must just help each other."

At which Cynthia rose and flung herself into my arms.

"That was what I wanted all along," she said, "to feel that I could be of use too. You will see how brave I can be. I can go anywhere with you and do anything, because I think I have loved you all the time."

"And you must forgive me, Cynthia," I said, "as well. For I did not know till this moment that I loved you, but I know it now; and I shall love you to the end."

As I said these words I turned, and saw Amroth smiling from afar; then with a wave of the hand to us, he turned and passed out of our sight.

XXVIII

Left to ourselves, Cynthia and I sat awhile in silence, hand in hand, like children, she looking anxiously at me. Our talk had broken down all possible reserve between us; but what was strange to me was that I felt, not like a lover with any need to woo, but as though we two had long since been wedded, and had just come to a knowledge of each other's hearts. At last we rose; and strange and bewildering as it all was, I think I was perhaps happier at this time than at any other time in the land of light, before or after.

And let me here say a word about these strange unions of soul that take place in that other land. There is there a whole range of affections, from courteous tolerance to intense passion. But there is a peculiar bond which springs up between

pairs of people, not always of different sex, in that country. My relation with Amroth had nothing of that emotion about it. That was simply like a transcendental essence of perfect friendship; but there was a peculiar relation, between pairs of souls, which seems to imply some curious duality of nature, of which earthly passion is but a symbol. It is accompanied by an absolute clearness of vision into the inmost soul and being of the other. Cynthia's mind was as clear to me in those days as a crystal globe might be which one could hold in one's hand, and my mind was as clear to her. There is a sense accompanying it almost of identity, as if the other nature was the exact and perfect complement of one's own; I can explain this best by an image. Think of a sphere, let us say, of alabaster, broken into two pieces by a blow, and one piece put away or mislaid. The first piece, let us suppose, stands in its accustomed place, and the owner often thinks in a trivial way of having it restored. One day, turning

over some lumber, he finds the other piece, and wonders if it is not the lost fragment. He takes it with him, and sees on applying it that the fractures correspond exactly, and that joined together the pieces complete the sphere.

Even so did Cynthia's soul fit into mine. But I grew to understand later the words of the Gospel—"they neither marry nor are given in marriage." These unions are not permanent, any more than they are really permanent on earth. On earth, owing to material considerations such as children and property, a marriage is looked upon as indissoluble. But this takes no account of the development of souls; and indeed many of the unions of earth, the passion once over, do grow into a very noble and beautiful friendship. But sometimes, even on earth, it is the other way; and passion once extinct, two natures often realise their dissimilarities rather than their similarities; and this is the cause of much unhappiness. But in the other land, two souls may de-

velop in quite different ways and at a different pace. And then this relation may also come quietly and simply to an end, without the least resentment or regret, and is succeeded invariably by a very tender and true friendship, each being sweetly and serenely content with all that has been given or received; and this friendship is not shaken or fretted, even if both of the lovers form new ties of close intimacy. Some natures form many of these ties, some few, some none at all. I believe that, as a matter of fact, each nature has its counterpart at all times, but does not always succeed in finding it. But the union, when it comes, seems to take precedence of all other emotions and all other work. I did not know this at the time; but I had a sense that my work was for a time over, because it seemed quite plain to me that as yet Cynthia was not in the least degree suited to the sort of work which I had been doing.

We walked on together for some time, in

a happy silence, though quiet communications of a blessed sort passed perpetually between us without any interchange of word. Our feet moved along the hillside, away from the crags, because I felt that Cynthia had no strength to climb them; and I wondered what our life would be.

Presently a valley opened before us, folding quietly in among the hills, full of a golden haze; and it seemed to me that our further way lay down it. It fell softly and securely into a further plain, the country being quite unlike anything I had as yet seen —a land of high and craggy mountains, the lower parts of them much overgrown with woods; the valley itself widened out, and passed gently among the hills, with here and there a lake. Dotted all about the mountain-bases, at the edges of the woods, were little white houses, stone-walled and stone-tiled, with small gardens; and then the place seemed to become strangely familiar and homelike; and I became aware that I was coming home: the same thought

occurred to Cynthia; and at last, when we turned a corner of the road, and saw lying a little back from the road a small house, with a garden in front of it, shaded by a group of sycamores, we darted forwards with a cry of delight to the home that was indeed our own. The door stood open as though we were certainly expected. It was the simplest little place, just a pair of rooms very roughly and plainly furnished. And there we embraced with tears of joy.

XXIX

The time that I spent in the valley home with Cynthia is the most difficult to describe of all my wanderings; because, indeed, there is nothing to describe. We were always together. Sometimes we wandered high up among the woods, and came out on the bleak mountain-heads. Sometimes we sat within and talked; and by a curious provision there were phenomena there that were more like changes of weather, and interchange of day and night, than at any other place in the heavenly country. Sometimes the whole valley would be shrouded with mists, sometimes it would be grey and overcast, sometimes the light was clear and radiant, but through it all there beat a pulse of light and darkness; and I do not know which was the more desirable—the hours when we walked in the forests, with

the wind moving softly in the leaves overhead like a falling sea, or those calm and silent nights when we seemed to sleep and dream, or when, if I waked, I could hear Cynthia's breath coming and going evenly as the breath of a tired child. It seemed like the essence of human passion, the end that lovers desire, and discern faintly behind and beyond the accidents of sense and contact, like the sounding of a sweet chord, without satiety or fever of the sense.

I learnt many strange and beautiful secrets of the human heart in those days: what the dreams of womanhood are—how wholly different from the dreams of man, in which there is always a combative element. The soul of Cynthia was like a silent cleft among the hills, which waits, in its own still content, until the horn of the shepherd winds the notes of a chord in the valley below; and then the cleft makes answer and returns an airy echo, blending the notes into a harmony of dulcet utterance. And she too, I doubt not, learnt some-

thing from my soul, which was eager and inventive enough, but restless and fugitive of purpose. And then there came a further joy to us. That which is fatherly and motherly in the world below is not a thing that is lost in heaven; and just as the love of man and woman can draw down and imprison a soul in a body of flesh, so in heaven the dear intention of one soul to another brings about a yearning, which grows day by day in intensity, for some further outlet of love and care.

It was one quiet misty morning that, as we sat together in tranquil talk, we heard faltering steps within our garden. We had seen, let me say, very little of the other inhabitants of our valley. We had sometimes seen a pair of figures wandering at a distance, and we had even met neighbours and exchanged a greeting. But the valley had no social life of its own, and no one ever seemed, so far as we knew, to enter any other dwelling, though they met in quiet friendliness. Cynthia went to the

door and opened it; then she darted out, and, just when I was about to follow, she returned, leading by the hand a tiny child, who looked at us with an air of perfect contentment and simplicity.

"Where on earth has this enchanting baby sprung from?" said Cynthia, seating the child upon her lap, and beginning to talk to it in a strangely unintelligible language, which the child appeared to understand perfectly.

I laughed. "Out of our two hearts, perhaps," I said. At which Cynthia blushed, and said that I did not understand or care for children. She added that men's only idea about children was to think how much they could teach them.

"Yes," I said, "we will begin lessons tomorrow, and go on to the Latin Grammar very shortly."

At which Cynthia folded the child in her arms, to defend it, and reassured it in a sentence which is far too silly to set down here.

I think that sometimes on earth the arrival of a first child is a very trying time for a wedded pair. The husband is apt to find his wife's love almost withdrawn from him, and to see her nourishing all kinds of jealousies and vague ambitions for her child. Paternity is apt to be a very bewildered and often rather dramatic emotion. But it was not so with us. The child seemed the very thing we had been needing without knowing it. It was a constant source of interest and delight; and in spite of Cynthia's attempts to keep it ignorant and even fatuous, it did develop a very charming intelligence, or rather, as I soon saw, began to perceive what it already knew. It soon overwhelmed us with questions, and used to patter about the garden with me, airing all sorts of delicious and absurd fancies. But, for all that, it did seem to make an end of the first utter closeness of our love. Cynthia after this seldom went far afield, and I ranged the hills and woods alone; but it was all absurdly and

continuously happy, though I began to wonder how long it could last, and whether my faculties and energies, such as they were, could continue thus unused. And I had, too, in my mind that other scene which I had beheld, of how the boy was withdrawn from the two old people in the other valley. Was it always thus, I wondered? Was it so, that souls were drawn upwards in ceaseless pilgrimage, loving and passing on, and leaving in the hearts of those who stayed behind a longing unassuaged, which was presently to draw them onwards from the peace which they loved perhaps too well?

XXX

The serene life came all to an end very suddenly, and with no warning. One day I had been sitting with Cynthia, and the child was playing on the floor with some little things—stones, bits of sticks, nuts—which it had collected. It was a mysterious game too, accompanied with much impressive talk and gesticulations, much emphatic lecturing of recalcitrant pebbles, with interludes of unaccountable laughter. We had been watching the child, when Cynthia leaned across to me and said:

"There is something in your mind, dear, which I cannot quite see into. It has been there for a long time, and I have not liked to ask you about it. Won't you tell me what it is?"

"Yes, of course," I said; "I will tell you anything I can."

"It has nothing to do with me," said Cynthia, "nor with the child; it is about yourself, I think; and it is not altogether a happy thought."

"It is not unhappy," I said, "because I am very happy and very well-content. It is just this, I think. You know, don't you, how I was being employed, before I came back, God be praised, to find you? I was being trained, very carefully and elaborately trained, I won't say to help people, but to be of use in a way. Well, I have been wondering why all that was suspended and cut short, just when I seemed to be finishing my training. I have been much happier here than I ever was before, of course. Indeed I have been so happy that I have sometimes thought it almost wrong that any one should have so much to enjoy. But I am puzzled, because the other work seems thrown away. If you wonder whether I want to leave our life here and go back to the other, of course I do not; but I have felt idle, and like a boy turned

down from a high class at school to a low one."

"That is not very complimentary to me!" said Cynthia, laughing. "Suppose we say a boy who has been working too hard for his health, and has been given a long holiday?"

"Yes," I said, "that is better. It is as if a clerk was told that he need not attend his office, but stay at home; and though it is pleasant enough, he feels as if he ought to be at his work, that he appreciates his home all the more when he can't sit reading the paper all the morning, and that he does not love his home less, but rather more, because he is away all the day."

"Yes," said Cynthia, "that is sensible enough; and I am amazed sometimes that you can be so good and patient about it all—so content to be so much with me and baby here; but I don't think it is quite—what shall I say?—quite healthy either!"

"Well," I said, "I have no wish to change; and here, I am glad to think, there

is never any doubt about what one is meant to do."

And so the subject dropped.

How little I thought then that this was to be the end of the old scene, and that the curtain was to draw up so suddenly upon a new one.

But the following morning I had been wandering contentedly enough in the wood, watching the shafts of light strike in among the trees, upon the glittering fronds of the ferns, and thinking idly of all my strange experiences. I came home, and to my surprise, as I came to the door, I heard talk going on inside. I went hastily in, and saw that Cynthia was not alone. She was sitting, looking very grave and serious, and wonderfully beautiful—her beauty had grown and increased in a marvellous way of late. And there were two men, one sitting in a chair near her and regarding her with a look of love; it was Lucius; and I saw at a glance that he was strangely changed. He had the same spirited and

mirthful look as of old, but there was something there which I had never seen before —the look of a man who had work of his own, and had learned something of the perplexity and suffering of responsibility. The other was Amroth, who was looking at the two with an air of irrepressible amusement. When I entered, Lucius rose, and Amroth said to me:

"Here I am again, you see, and wondering whether you can regain the pleasure you once were kind enough to take in my company?"

"What nonsense!" I said rather shamefacedly. "How often have I blushed in secret to think of that awful remark. But I was rather harried, you must admit."

Amroth came across to me and put his arm through mine.

"I forgive you," he said, "and I will admit that I was very provoking; but things were in a mess, and, besides, it was very inconvenient for me to be called away at that moment from my job!"

But Lucius came up to me and said:

"I have come to apologise to you. My behaviour was hideous and horrible. I won't make any excuses, and I don't suppose you can ever forget what I did. I was utterly and entirely in the wrong."

"Thank you, Lucius," I said. "But please say no more about it. My own behaviour on that occasion was infamous too. And really we need not go back on all that. The whole affair has become quite an agreeable reminiscence. It is a pleasure, when it is all over, to have been thoroughly and wholesomely shown up, and to discover that one has been a pompous and priggish ass. And you and Amroth between you did me that blessed turn. I am not quite sure which of you I hated most. But I may say one thing, and that is that I am heartily glad to see you have left the land of delight."

"It was a tedious place really," said Lucius, "but one felt bound in honour to make the best of it. But indeed after that

day it was horrible. And I wearied for a sight of Cynthia! But you seem to have done very well for yourselves here. May I venture to say frankly how well she is looking, and you too? But I am not going to interrupt you. I have got my billet, I am thankful to say. It is not a very exalted one, but it is better than I deserve; and I shall try to make up for wasted time."

"Hear, hear!" said Amroth; "a very creditable sentiment, to be sure!"

Lucius smiled and blushed. Then he said:

"I never was much of a hand at expressing myself correctly; but you know what I mean. Don't take the wind out of my sails!"

And then Amroth turned to me, and said suddenly:

"And now I have something else to tell you, and not wholly good news; so I will just say it at once, without beating about the bush. You are to come with us too."

Cynthia looked up suddenly with a glance of pale inquiry. Amroth took her hand.

"No, dear child," he said, "you are not to accompany him. You must stay here awhile, until the child is grown. But don't look like that! There is no such thing as separation here, or anywhere. Don't make it harder for us all. It is unpleasant of course; but, good heavens, what would become of us all if it were not for that! How dull we should be without suffering!"

"Yes, yes," said Cynthia, "I know—and I will say nothing against it. But—" and she burst into tears.

"Come, come," said Amroth cheerfully, "we must not go back to the old days, and behave as if there were partings and funerals. I will give you five minutes alone to say good-bye. Lucius, we must start," and, turning to me, he said, "Meet us in five minutes by the oak-tree in the road."

They went out, Lucius kissing Cynthia's hand in silence.

Cynthia came up to me and put her arms

round my neck and her cheek to mine. We sobbed, I fear, like two children.

"Don't forget me, dearest," she said.

"My darling, what a word!" I said.

"Oh, how happy we have been together!" she said.

"Yes, and shall be happier still," I said.

And then with more words and signs of love, too sacred even to be written down, we parted. It was over. I looked back once, and saw my darling gather the child to her heart, and look up once more at me. Then I closed the door; something seemed to surge up in my heart and overwhelm me; and then the ring on my finger sent a sharp pang through my whole frame, which recalled me to myself. And I say it with all the strength of my spirit, I saw how joyful a thing it was to suffer and grieve. I came down to the oak. The two were waiting in silence, and Lucius seemed to be in tears. Amroth put his arm through mine.

"Come, brother," he said, "that was a

bad business; I won't pretend otherwise; but these things had better come swiftly."

"Yes," said Lucius, "but it is a cruel affair, and I can't say otherwise. Why cannot God leave us alone?"

"Lucius," said Amroth very gravely, "here you may say and think as you will —and the thoughts of the heart are best uttered. But one must not blaspheme."

"No, no," said Lucius, "I was wrong. I ought not to have spoken so. And indeed I know in my heart that somehow, far off, it is well. But I was thinking," he said, turning to me, and grasping my hand in both of his own, "not of you, but of Cynthia. I am glad with all my heart that you took her from me, and have made her happy. But what miserable creatures we all are; and how much more miserable we should be if we were not miserable!"

And then we started. It was a dreary hour that, full of deep and gnawing pain. I pictured to myself Cynthia at every moment, what she was doing and thinking;

how swiftly the good days had flown; how perfectly happy I had been; and so my wretched silent reverie went on.

"I must say," said Amroth at length, breaking a dismal silence, "that this is very tedious. Can't you take some interest? I have very disagreeable things to do, but that is no reason why I should be bored as well!" And he then set himself to talk with much zest of all my old friends and companions, telling me how each was faring. Charmides, it seemed, had become a very accomplished architect and designer; Philip was a teacher at the College. And he went on until, in spite of my heaviness, I felt the whole of life beginning to widen and vibrate all about me, and a sense almost of shame creeping into my mind that I had become so oblivious of all the other friendships and relations I had formed. I forced myself to talk and to ask questions, and found myself walking more briskly. It was not very long before we parted with Lucius. He was left at the doors of a great barrack-

like building, and Amroth told me he was to be employed as an officer, very much in the same way as the young man who was sent to conduct me away from the trial; and I felt what a good officer Lucius would make—smart, prompt, polite, and not in the least sentimental.

So we went on together rather gloomily; and then Amroth let me look for a little deep into his heart; and I saw that it was filled with a kind of noble pity for me in my suffering; but behind the pity lay that blissful certainty which made Amroth so light-hearted, that it was just so, through suffering, that one became wise; and he could no more think of it as irksome or sad than a jolly undergraduate thinks of the training for a race or the rowing in the race as painful, but takes it all with a kind of high-hearted zest, and finds even the nervousness an exciting thing, life lived at high pressure in a crowded hour.

XXXI

And thus we came ourselves to a new place, though I took but little note of all we passed, for my mind was bent inward upon itself and upon Cynthia. The place was a great solid stone building, in many courts, with fine tree-shaded fields all about; a school, it seemed to me, with boys and girls going in and out, playing games together. Amroth told me that children were bestowed here who had been of naturally fine and frank dispositions, but who had lived their life on earth under foul and cramped conditions, by which they had been fretted rather than tainted. It seemed a very happy and busy place. Amroth took me into a great room that seemed a sort of library or common-room. There was no one there, and I was glad to sit and rest; when suddenly the door opened, and a man came

in with outstretched hands and a smile of welcome. I looked up, and it was none but the oldest and dearest friend of my last life, who had died before me. He had been a teacher, a man of the simplest and most guileless life, whose whole energy and delight was given to teaching and loving the young. The surprising thing about him had always been that he could meet one, after a long silence or a suspension of intercourse, as simply and easily as if one had but left him the day before; and it was just the same here. There was no effusiveness of greeting—we just fell at once into the old familiar talk.

"You are just the same," I said to him, looking at the burly figure, the big, almost clumsy, head, and the irradiating smile. His great charm had always been an entire unworldliness and absence of ambition.

He smiled at this and said:

"Yes, I am afraid I am too easy-going." He had never cared to talk about himself, and now he said, "Well, yes, I go along in

my old prosy way. It is just like the old schooldays, with half the difficulties gone. Of course the children are not always good, but that makes it the more amusing; and one can see much more easily what they are thinking of and dreaming about."

I found myself telling him my adventures, which he heard with the same quiet attention; and I was sure that he would never forget a single point—he never forgot anything in the old days.

"Yes," he said at the end, "that's a wonderful story. You always had the trouble of the adventures, and I had the fun of hearing them."

He asked me what I was now going to do, and I said that I had not the least idea.

"Oh, that will be all right," he said.

It was all so comfortable and simple, so obvious indeed, that I laughed to think of the bitter and miserable reveries I had indulged in when he was taken from me, and when the stay of my life seemed gone. The

whole incident seemed to give me back a touch of the serenity which I had lost, and I saw how beautifully this joy of meeting had been planned for me, when I wanted it most. Presently he said that he must go off for a lesson, and asked me to come with him and see the children. We went into a big class-room, where some boys and girls were assembling. Here he was exactly the same as ever; no sentiment, but just a kind of bluff paternal kindness. The lesson was most informal—a good deal of questioning and answering; it was a biographical lecture, but devoted, I saw, in a simple way, to tracing the development of the hero's character. "What made him do that?" was a constant question. The answers were most ingenious and extraordinarily lively; but the order was perfect. At the end he called up two or three children who had shown some impatience or jealousy in the lesson, and said a few half-humorous words to them, with an air of affectionate interest.

"They are jolly little creatures," he said when they had all gone out.

"Yes," I said, with a sigh, "I do indeed envy you. I wish I could be set to something of the kind."

"Oh, no, you don't," he said; "this is too simple for you! You want something more artistic and more psychological. This would bore you to extinction."

We walked all round the place, saw the games going on, and were presently joined by Amroth, who seemed to be on terms of old acquaintanceship with my friend. I was surprised at this, and he said:

"Why, yes, Amroth had the pleasure of bringing me here too. Things are done here in groups, you know; and Amroth knows all about our lot. It is very well organised, much better than one perceives at first. You remember how you and I drifted to school together, and the set of boys we found ourselves with—my word, what young ruffians some of us were! Well,

of course all that had been planned, though we did not know it."

"What!" said I; "the evil as well as the good?"

The two looked at each other and smiled.

"That is not a very real distinction," said Amroth. "Of course the poor bodies got in the way, as always; there was some fizzing and some precipitation, as they say in chemistry. But you each of you gave and received just what you were meant to give and receive; though these are complicated matters, like the higher mathematics; and we must not talk of them to-day. If one can escape the being shocked at things and yet be untainted by them, and, on the other hand, if one can avoid pomposity and yet learn self-respect, that is enough. But you are tired to-day, and I want you just to rest and be refreshed."

Presently Amroth asked me if I should like to stay there awhile, and I most willingly consented.

"You want something to do," he said,

"and you shall have some light employment."

That same day, before Amroth left me, I had a curious talk with him.

I said to him: "Let me ask you one question. I had always had a sort of hope that when I came to the land of spirits, I should have a chance of seeing and hearing something of some of the great souls of earth. I had dimly imagined a sort of reception, where one could wander about and listen to the talk of the men one had admired and longed to see—Plato, let me say, and Shakespeare, Walter Scott, and Shelley—some of the immortals. But I don't seem to have seen anything of them —only just ordinary and simple people."

Amroth laughed.

"You do say the most extraordinarily ingenuous things," he said. "In the first place, of course, we have quite a different scale of values here. People do not take rank by their accomplishments, but by their power of loving. Many of the great men

of earth—and this is particularly the case with writers and artists—are absolutely nothing here. They had, it is true, a fine and delicate brain, on which they played with great skill; but half the artists of the world are great as artists, simply because they do not care. They perceive and they express; but they would not have the heart to do it at all, if they really cared. Some of them, no doubt, were men of great hearts, and they have their place and work. But to claim to see all the highest spirits together is as absurd as if you called on a doctor in London at eleven o'clock and expected to meet all the great physicians at his house, intent on general conversation. Some of the great people, indeed, you have met, and they were very simple persons on earth. The greatest person you have hitherto seen was a butler on earth—the master of your College. And if it does not shock your aristocratic susceptibilities too much, the President of this place kept a small shop in a country village. But one

of the teachers here was actually a marquis in the world! Does that uplift you? He teaches the little girls how to play cricket, and he is a very good dancer. Perhaps you would like to be introduced to him?"

"Don't treat me as a child," I said, rather pettishly.

"No, no," said Amroth, "it is n't that. But you are one of those impressible people; and they always find it harder to disentangle themselves from the old ideas."

I spent a long and happy time in the school. I was given a little teaching to do, and found it perfectly enchanting. Imagine children with everything greedy and sensual gone, with none of the crossness or spitefulness that comes of fatigue or pressure, but with all the interesting passions of humanity, admiration, keenness, curiosity, and even jealousy, emulation, and anger, all alive and active in them. They were not angelic children at all, neither meek nor mild. But they were generous and affectionate, and it was easy to evoke

these feelings. The one thing absent from the whole place was any touch of sentimentality, which arises from natural affections suppressed into a giggling kind of secrecy. They expressed affection loudly and frankly, just as they expressed indignation and annoyance. All the while I kept Cynthia in my heart; she was ever before me in a thousand sweet postures and with innumerable glances. But I saw much of my sturdy and wholesome-minded old friend; and the sore pain of parting faded away out of my heart, and left me with nothing but the purest and deepest love, which helped me in all I did or said, and made me patient and tender-hearted. And thus the period sped not unhappily away, though I had my times of agony and despair.

XXXII

I BECAME aware at this time, very gradually and even solemnly, that some crisis of my life was approaching. How the monition came to me I hardly know; I felt like a man wandering in the dark, with eyes strained and hands outstretched, who is dimly aware of some great object, tree or haystack or house, looming up ahead of him, which he cannot directly see, but of which he is yet conscious by the vibration of some sixth sense. The wonder came by degrees to overshadow my thoughts with a sense of expectant awe, and to permeate all the urgent concerns of my life with its shadowy presence. Even the thought of Cynthia, who indeed was always in my mind, became obscured with the dimness of this obscure anticipation.

One day Amroth stood beside me as I

worked; he was very grave and serious, but with a joyful kind of courage about him. I pushed my books and papers away, and rose to greet him, saying half-unconsciously, and just putting my thought into words:

"So it has come!"

"Yes," said Amroth, "it has come! I have known it for some little time, and my thought has mingled with yours. I tell you frankly that I did not quite expect it; but one never knows here. You must come with me at once. You are to see the last mystery; and though I am glad for your sake that it is come, yet I tremble for you, because it is unlike any other experience; and one can never be the same again."

I felt myself oppressed by a sudden terror of darkness, but, half to reassure myself, I answered lightly:

"But it does not seem to have affected you, Amroth! You are always light-hearted and cheerful, and not overshadowed by any dark or gloomy thoughts."

"Yes, yes," said Amroth hurriedly. "It is easy enough, when it is once over. Nothing that is behind one matters; but this is a thing that one cannot jest about. Of course there is nothing to fear; but to be brought face to face with the greatest thing in the world is not a light matter. Let me say this. I am to be with you all through; and my only word to you is that you must do exactly what I tell you, and at once, without any doubting or flinching. Then all will be well! But we must not delay. Come at once, and keep your mind perfectly quiet."

We went out together; and there seemed to have fallen a sense of gravity over all whom we met. My companions did not speak to me as we walked out, but stood aside to see me pass, and even looked at me, I thought, with an air half of reverence, half of a sort of natural compassion, as one might watch a dear friend go to be tried for his life.

We came out of the door, and found, it

seemed to me, an unusual stillness everywhere. The wind, which often blew high on the bare moor, had dropped. We took a path, which I had never seen, which struck off over the hills. We walked for a long time, almost in silence. But I could not bear the strange curiosity which was straining at my heart, and I said presently to Amroth:

"Give me some idea what I am to see or to endure. Is it some judgment which I am to face, or am I to suffer pain? I would rather know the best and the worst of it."

"It is everything," said Amroth; "you are to see God. All is comprised in that."

His words fell with a shocking distinctness in the calm air, and I felt my heart and limbs fail me, and a dizziness came over my mind. Hardly knowing what I did or said, I came to a stop.

"But I did not know that it was possible," I said. "I thought that God was

everywhere—within us, about us, beyond us? How can that be?"

"Yes," said Amroth, "God is indeed everywhere, and no place contains Him; neither can any of us see or comprehend Him. I cannot explain it; but there is a centre, so to speak, near to which the unclean and the evil cannot come, where the fire of His thought burns the hottest. . . . Oh," he said, "neither word nor thought is of any use here; you will see what you will see!"

Perhaps the hardest thing I had to bear in all my wanderings was the sight of Amroth's own fear. It was unmistakable. His spirit seemed prepared for it, perfectly courageous and sincere as it was; but there was a shuddering awe upon him, for all that, which infected me with an extremity of terror. Was it that he thought me unequal to the experience? I could not tell. But we walked as men dragging themselves into some fiery and dreadful martyrdom.

Again I could not bear it, and I cried out suddenly:

"But, Amroth, He is Love; and we can enter without fear into the presence of Love!"

"Have you not yet guessed," said Amroth sternly, "how terrible Love can be? It is the most terrible thing in the world, because it is the strongest. If Death is dreadful, what must that be which is stronger than Death? Come, let us be silent, for we are near the place, and this is no time for words;" and then he added with a look of the deepest compassion and tenderness, "I wish I could speak differently, brother, at this hour; but I am myself afraid."

And at that we gave up all speech, and only our thoughts sprang together and intertwined, like two children that clasp each other close in a burning house, when the smoke comes volleying from the door.

We were coming now to what looked like a ridge of rocks ahead of us; and I saw here

a wonderful thing, a great light of incredible pureness and whiteness, which struck upwards from the farther side. This began to light up our own pale faces, and to throw our backs into a dark shadow, even though the radiance of the heavenly day was all about us. And at last we came to the place.

It was the edge of a precipice so vast, so stupendous, that no word can even dimly describe its depth; it was all illuminated with incredible clearness by the light which struck upwards from below. It was absolutely sheer, great pale cliffs of white stone running downwards into the depth. To left and right the precipice ran, with an irregular outline, so that one could see the cliff-fronts gleam how many millions of leagues below! There seemed no end to it. But at a certain point far down in the abyss the light seemed stronger and purer. I was at first so amazed by the sight that I gazed in silence. Then a dreadful dizziness came over me, and I felt Amroth's

hand put round me to sustain me. Then in a faint whisper, that was almost inaudible, Amroth, pointing with his finger downwards, said:

"Watch that place where the light seems clearest."

I did so. Suddenly there came, as from the face of the cliff, a thing like a cloudy jet of golden steam. It passed out into the clear air, shaping itself in strange and intricate curves; then it grew darker in colour, hung for an instant like a cloud of smoke, and then faded into the sky.

"What is that?" I said, surprised out of my terror.

"I may tell you that," said Amroth, "that you may know what you see. There is no time here; and you have seen a universe made, and live its life, and die. You have seen the worlds created. That cloud of whirling suns, each with its planets, has taken shape before your eyes; life has arisen there, has developed; men like ourselves have lived, have wrestled with evil, have

formed states, have died and vanished. That is all but a single thought of God."

Another came, and then another of the golden jets, each fading into darkness and dispersing.

"And now," said Amroth, "the moment has come. You are to make the last sacrifice of the soul. Do not shrink back, fear nothing. Leap into the abyss!"

The thought fell upon me with an infinity and an incredulity of horror that I cannot express in words. I covered my eyes with my hands.

"Oh, I cannot, I cannot," I said; "anything but this! God be merciful; let me go rather to some infinite place of torment where at least I may feel myself alive. Do not ask this of me!"

Amroth made no answer, and I saw that he was regarding me fixedly, himself pale to the lips; but with a touch of anger and even of contempt, mixed with a world of compassion and love. There was something in this look which seemed to entreat me

mutely for my own sake and his own to act. I do not know what the impulse was that came to me—self-contempt, trust, curiosity, the yearning of love. I closed my eyes, I took a faltering step, and stumbled, huddling and aghast, over the edge. The air flew up past me with a sort of shriek; I opened my eyes once, and saw the white cliffs speeding past. Then an unconsciousness came over me and I knew no more.

XXXIII

I CAME to myself very gradually and dimly, with no recollection at first of what had happened. I was lying on my back on some soft grassy place, with the air blowing cool over me. I thought I saw Amroth bending over me with a look of extraordinary happiness, and felt his arm about me; but again I became unconscious, yet all the time with a blissfulness of repose and joy, far beyond what I had experienced at my first waking on the sunlit sea. Again life dawned upon me. I was there, I was myself. What had happened to me? I could not tell. So I lay for a long time half dreaming and half swooning; till at last life seemed to come back suddenly to me, and I sat up. Amroth was holding me in his arms close to the spot from which I had sprung.

"Have I been dreaming?" I said. "Was

it here? and when? I cannot remember. It seems impossible, but was I told to jump down? What has happened to me? I am confused."

"You will know presently," said Amroth, in a tone from which all the fear seemed to have vanished. "It is all over, and I am thankful. Do not try to recollect; it will come back to you presently. Just rest now; you have been through strange things."

Suddenly a thought began to shape itself in my mind, a thought of perfect and irresistible joy.

"Yes," I said, "I remember now. We were afraid, both of us, and you told me to leap down. But what was it that I saw, and what was it that was told me? I cannot recall it. Oh," I said at last, "I know now; it comes back to me. I fell, in hideous cowardice and misery. The wind blew shrill. I saw the cliffs stream past; then I was unconscious, I think. I seem to have died; but part of me was not dead. My

flight was stayed, and I floated out somewhere. I was joined to something that was like both fire and water in one. I was seen and known and understood and loved, perfectly and unutterably and for ever. But there was pain, somewhere, Amroth! How was that? I am sure there was pain."

"Of course, dear child," said Amroth, "there was pain, because there was everything."

"But," I said, "I cannot understand yet; why was that terrible leap demanded of me? And why did I confront it with such abject cowardice and dismay? Surely one need not go stumbling and cowed into the presence of God?"

"There is no other way," said Amroth; "you do not understand how terrible perfect love is. It is because it is perfect that it is terrible. Our own imperfect love has some weakness in it. It is mixed with pleasure, and then it is not a sacrifice; one gives as much of oneself as one chooses; one is known just so far as one wishes to

be known. But here with God there must be no concealment—though even there a man can withhold his heart from God—God never uses compulsion; and the will can prevail even against Him. But the reason of the leap that must be taken is this: it is the last surrender, and it cannot be made on our terms and conditions; it must be absolute. And what I feared for you was not anything that would happen if you did commit yourself to God, but what would happen if you did not; for, of course, you could have resisted, and then you would have had to begin again."

I was silent for a little, and then I said:

"I remember now more clearly, but did I really see Him? It seems so absolutely simple. Nothing happened. I just became one with the heart and life of the world; I came home at last. Yet how am I here? How is it I was not merged in light and life?"

"Ah," said Amroth, "it is the new birth. You can never be the same again. But

you are not yet lost in Him. The time for that is not yet. It is a mystery; but as yet God works outward, radiates energy and force and love; the time will come when all will draw inward again, and be merged in Him. But the world is as yet in its dawning. The rising sun scatters light and heat, and the hot and silent noon is yet to come; then the shadows move eastward, and after that comes the waning sunset and the evening light, and last of all the huge and starlit peace of the night."

"But," I said, "if this is really so, if I have been gathered close to God's heart, why is it that instead of feeling stronger, I only feel weak and unstrung? I have indeed an inner sense of peace and happiness, but I have no will or purpose of my own that I can discern."

"That," said Amroth, "is because you have given up all. The sense of strength is part of our weakness. Our plans, our schemes, our ambitions, all the things that make us enjoy and hope and arrange, are

but signs of our incompleteness. Your will is still as molten metal, it has borne the fierce heat of inner love; and this has taken all that is hard and stubborn and complacent out of you—for a time. But when you return to the life of the body, as you will return, there will be this great difference in you. You will have to toil and suffer, and even sin. But there will be one thing that you will not do: you will never be complacent or self-righteous, you will not judge others hardly. You will be able to forgive and to make allowances; you will concern yourself with loving others, not with trying to improve them up to your own standard. You will wish them to be different, but you will not condemn them for being different; and hereafter the lives you live on earth will be of the humblest. You will have none of the temptations of authority, or influence, or ambition again —all that will be far behind you. You will live among the poor, you will do the most menial and commonplace drudgery, you

will have none of the delights of life. You will be despised and contemned for being ugly and humble and serviceable and meek. You will be one of those who will be thought to have no spirit to rise, no power of making men serve your turn. You will miss what are called your chances, you will be a failure; but you will be trusted and loved by children and simple people; they will depend upon you, and you will make the atmosphere in which you live one of peace and joy. You will have selfish employers, tyrannical masters, thankless children perhaps, for whom you will slave lovingly. They will slight you and even despise you, but their hearts will turn to you again and again, and yours will be the face that they will remember when they come to die, as that of the one person who loved them truly and unquestioningly. That will be your destiny; one of utter obscurity and nothingness upon earth. Yet each time, when you return hither, your work will be higher and holier, and nearer to the heart of God.

And now I have said enough; for you have seen God, as I too saw Him long ago; and our hope is henceforward the same."

"Yes," I said to Amroth, "I am content. I had thought that I should be exalted and elated by my privileges; but I have no thought or dream of that. I only desire to go where I am sent, to do what is desired of me. I have laid my burden down."

XXXIV

PRESENTLY Amroth rose, and said that we must be going onward.

"And now," he said, "I have a further thing to tell you, and that is that I have very soon to leave you. To bring you hither was the last of my appointed tasks, and my work is now done. It is strange to remember how I bore you in my arms out of life, like a little sleeping child, and how much we have been together."

"Do not leave me now," I said to Amroth. "There seems so much that I have to ask you. And if your work with me is done, where are you now going?"

"Where am I going, brother?" said Amroth. "Back to life again, and immediately. And there is one thing more that is permitted, and that is that you should be with me to the last. Strange that I should have

attended you here, to the very crown and sum of life, and that you should now attend me where I am going! But so it is."

"And what do you feel about it?" I said.

"Oh," said Amroth, "I do not like it, of course. To be so free and active here, and to be bound again in the body, in the close, suffering, ill-savoured house of life! But I have much to gain by it. I have a sharpness of temper and a peremptoriness —of which indeed," he said, smiling, "you have had experience. I am fond of doing things in my own way, inconsiderate of others, and impatient if they do not go right. I am hard, and perhaps even vulgar. But now I am going like a board to the carpenter, to have some of my roughness planed out of me, and I hope to do better."

"Well," I said, "I am too full of wonder and hope just now to be alarmed for you. I could even wish I were myself departing. But I have a desire to see Cynthia again."

"Yes," said Amroth, "and you will see

her; but you will not be long after me, brother; comfort yourself with that!"

We walked a little farther across the moorland, talking softly at intervals, till suddenly I discerned a solitary figure which was approaching us swiftly.

"Ah," said Amroth, "my time has indeed come. I am summoned."

He waved his hand to the man, who came up quickly and even breathlessly, and handed Amroth a sealed paper. Amroth tore it open, read it smilingly, gave a nod to the officer, saying "Many thanks." The officer saluted him; he was a brisk young man, with a fresh air; and he then, without a word, turned from us and went over the moorland.

"Come," said Amroth, "let us descend. You can do this for yourself now; you do not need my help." He took my hand, and a mist enveloped us. Suddenly the mist broke up and streamed away. I looked round me in curiosity.

We were standing in a very mean street

of brick-built houses, with slated roofs; over the roofs we could see a spire, and the chimneys of mills, spouting smoke. The houses had tiny smoke-dried gardens in front of them. At the end of the street was an ugly, ill-tended field, on which much rubbish lay. There were some dirty children playing about, and a few women, with shawls over their heads, were standing together watching a house opposite. The window of an upper room was open, and out of it came cries and moans.

"It's going very badly with her," said one of the women, "poor soul; but the doctor will be here soon. She was about this morning too. I had a word with her, and she was feeling very bad. I said she ought to be in bed, but she said she had her work to do first."

The women glanced at the window with a hushed sort of sympathy. A young woman, evidently soon to become a mother, looked pale and apprehensive.

"Will she get through?" she said timidly.

"Oh, don't you fear, Sarah," said one of the women, kindly enough. "She will be all right. Bless you, I 've been through it five times myself, and I am none the worse. And when it 's over she 'll be as comfortable as never was. It seems worth it then."

A man suddenly turned the corner of the street; he was dressed in a shabby overcoat with a bowler hat, and he carried a bag in his hand. He came past us. He looked a busy, overtried man, but he had a good-humoured air. He nodded pleasantly to the women. One said:

"You are wanted badly in there, doctor."

"Yes," he said cheerfully, "I am making all the haste I can. Where 's John?"

"Oh, he 's at work," said the woman. "He did n't expect it to-day. But he 's better out of the way: he 'd be no good; he 'd only be interfering and grumbling; but I 'll come across with you, and when it 's over, I 'll just run down and tell him."

"That 's right," said the doctor, "come

along—the nurse will be round in a minute; and I can make things easy meantime."

Strange to say, it had hardly dawned upon me what was happening. I turned to Amroth, who stood there smiling, but a little pale, his arm in mine; fresh and upright, with his slim and graceful limbs, his bright curled hair, a strange contrast to the slatternly women and the heavily-built doctor.

"So this," he said, "is where I am to spend a few years; my new father is a hard-working man, I believe, perhaps a little given to drink but kind enough; and I dare-say some of these children are my brothers and sisters. A score of years or more to spend here, no doubt! Well, it might be worse. You will think of me while you can, and if you have the time, you may pay me a visit, though I don't suppose I shall recognise you."

"It seems rather dreadful to me," said I, "I must confess! Who would have thought that I should have forgotten my

visions so soon? Amroth, dear, I can't bear this—that you should suffer such a change."

"Sentiment again, brother," said Amroth. "To me it is curious and interesting, even exciting. Well, good-bye; my time is just up, I think."

The doctor had gone into the house, and the cries died away. A moment after a woman in the dress of a nurse came quickly along the street, knocked, opened the door, and went in. I could see into the room, a poorly furnished one. A girl sat nursing a baby by the fire, and looked very much frightened. A little boy played in the corner. A woman was bustling about, making some preparations for a meal.

"Let me do you the honours of my new establishment," said Amroth with a smile. "No, dear man, don't go with me any farther. We will part here, and when we meet again we shall have some new stories to tell. Bless you." He took his hand from my arm, caught up my hand, kissed

it, said, "There, that is for you," and disappeared smiling into the house.

A moment later there came the cry of a new-born child from the window above. The doctor came out and went down the street; one of the women joined him and walked with him. A few minutes later she returned with a young and sturdy workman, looking rather anxious.

"It 's all right," I heard her say, "it 's a fine boy, and Annie is doing well—she 'll be about again soon enough."

They disappeared into the house, and I turned away.

XXXV

It is difficult to describe the strange emotions with which the departure of Amroth filled me. I think that, when I first entered the heavenly country, the strongest feeling I experienced was the sense of security—the thought that the earthly life was over and done with, and that there remained the rest and tranquillity of heaven. What I cannot even now understand is this. I am dimly aware that I have lived a great series of lives, in each of which I have had to exist blindly, not knowing that my life was not bounded and terminated by death, and only darkly guessing and hoping, in passionate glimpses, that there might be a permanent life of the soul behind the life of the body. And yet, at first, on entering the heavenly country, I did not remember having entered it before; it was not familiar

to me, nor did I at first recall in memory that I had been there before. The earthly life seems to obliterate for a time even the heavenly memory. But the departure of Amroth swept away once and for all the sense of security. One felt of the earthly life, indeed, as a busy man may think of a troublesome visit he has to pay, which breaks across the normal current of his life, while he anticipates with pleasure his return to the usual activities of home across the interval of social distraction, which he does not exactly desire, but yet is glad that it should intervene, if only for the heightened sense of delight with which he will resume his real life. I had been happy in heaven, though with periods of discontent and moments of dismay. But I no longer desired a dreamful ease; I only wished passionately to be employed. And now I saw that I must resign all expectation of that. As so often happens, both on earth and in heaven, I had found something of which I was not in search, while the work which I

had estimated so highly, and prepared myself so ardently for, had never been given to me to do at all.

But for the moment I had but one single thought. I was to see Cynthia again, and I might then expect my own summons to return to life. What surprised me, on looking back at my present sojourn, was the extreme apparent fortuitousness of it. It had not been seemingly organised or laid out on any plan; and yet it had shown me this, that my own intentions and desires counted for nothing. I had meant to work, and I had been mostly idle; I had intended to study psychology, and I had found love. How much wiser and deeper it had all been than anything which I had designed!

Even now I was uncertain how to find Cynthia. But recollecting that Amroth had warned me that I had gained new powers which I might exercise, I set myself to use them. I concentrated myself upon the thought of Cynthia; and in a moment, just as the hand of a man in a

dark room, feeling for some familiar object, encounters and closes upon the thing he is seeking, I seemed to touch and embrace the thought of Cynthia. I directed myself thither. The breeze fanned my hair, and as I opened my eyes I saw that I was in an unfamiliar place—not the forest where I had left Cynthia, but in a terraced garden, under a great hill, wooded to the peak. Stone steps ran up through the terraces, the topmost of which was crowned by a long irregular building, very quaintly designed. I went up the steps, and, looking about me, caught sight of two figures seated on a wooden seat at a little distance from me, overlooking the valley. One of these was Cynthia. The other was a young and beautiful woman; the two were talking earnestly together. Suddenly Cynthia turned and saw me, and rising quickly, came to me and caught me in her arms.

"I was sure you were somewhere near me, dearest," she said; "I dreamed of you

last night, and you have been in my thoughts all day."

My darling was in some way altered. She looked older, wiser, and calmer, but she was in my eyes even more beautiful. The other girl, who had looked at us in surprise for a moment, rose too and came shyly forwards. Cynthia caught her hand, and presented her to me, adding, "And now you must leave us alone for a little, if you will forgive me for asking it, for we have much to ask and to say."

The girl smiled and went off, looking back at us, I thought, half-enviously.

We went and sat down on the seat, and Cynthia said:

"Something has happened to you, dear one, I see, since I saw you last—something great and glorious."

"Yes," I said, "you are right; I have seen the beginning and the end; and I have not yet learned to understand it. But I am the same, Cynthia, and yours utterly. We will speak of this later. Tell me first

what has happened to you, and what this place is. I will not waste time in talking; I want to hear you talk and to see you talk. How often have I longed for that!"

Cynthia took my hand in both of her own, and then unfolded to me her story. She had lived long in the forest, alone with the child, and then the day had come when the desire to go farther had arisen in his mind, and he had left her, and she had felt strangely desolate, till she too had been summoned.

"And this place—how can I describe it?" she said. "It is a home for spirits who have desired love on earth, and who yet, from some accident of circumstance, have never found one to love them with any intimacy of passion. How strange it is to think," she went on, "that I, just by the inheritance of beauty, was surrounded with love and the wrong sort of love, so that I never learned to love rightly and truly; while so many, just from some lack of

beauty, some homeliness or ungainliness of feature or carriage, missed the one kind of love that would have sustained and fed them—have never been held in a lover's arms, or held a child of their own against their heart. And so," she went on smiling, "many of them lavished their tenderness upon animals or crafty servants or selfish relations; and grew old and fanciful and petulant before their time. It seems a sad waste of life that! Because so many of them are spirits that could have loved finely and devotedly all the time. But here," she said, "they unlearn their caprices, and live a life by strict rule—and they go out hence to have the care of children, or to tend broken lives into tranquillity—and some of them, nay most of them, find heavenly lovers of their own. They are odd, fractious people at first, curiously concerned about health and occupation; and one can often do nothing but listen to their complaints. But they find their way out in time, and one can help

them a little, as soon as they begin to desire to hear something of other lives but their own. They have to learn to turn love outwards instead of inwards; just as I," she added laughing, "had to turn my own love inwards instead of outwards."

Then I told Cynthia what I could tell of my own experiences, and she heard them with astonishment. Then I said:

"What surprises me about it, is that I seem somehow to have been given more than I can hold. I have a very shallow and trivial nature, like a stream that sparkles pleasantly enough over a pebbly bottom, but in which no boat or man can swim. I have always been absorbed in the observation of details and in the outside of things. I spent so much energy in watching the faces and gestures and utterances and tricks of those about me that I never had the leisure to look into their hearts. And now these great depths have opened before me, and I feel more childish and feeble than ever, like a frail glass which

holds a most precious liquor, and gains brightness and glory from the hues of the wine it holds, but is not like the gem, compact of colour and radiance."

Cynthia laughed at me.

"At all events, you have not forgotten how to make metaphors," she said.

"No," said I, "that is part of the mischief, that I see the likenesses of things and not their essences." At which she laughed again more softly, and rested her cheek on my shoulder.

Then I told her of the departure of Amroth.

"That is wonderful," she said.

And then I told her of my own approaching departure, at which she grew sad for a moment. Then she said, "But come, let us not waste time in forebodings. Will you come with me into the house to see the likenesses of things, or shall we have an hour alone together, and try to look into essences?"

I caught her by the hand.

"No," I said, "I care no more about the machinery of these institutions. I am the pilgrim of love, and not the student of organisations. If you may quit your task, and leave your ladies to regretful memories of their lap-dogs, let us go out together for a little, and say what we can—for I am sure that my time is approaching."

Cynthia smiled and left me, and returned running; and then we rambled off together, up the steep paths of the woodland, to the mountain-top, from which we had a wide prospect of the heavenly country, a great blue well-watered plain lying out for leagues before us, with the shapes of mysterious mountains in the distance. But I can give no account of all we said or did, for heart mingled with heart, and there was little need of speech. And even so, in those last sweet hours, I could not help marvelling at how utterly different Cynthia's heart and mind were from my own; even then it was a constant shock of surprise that we should understand each other so

perfectly, and yet feel so differently about so much. It seemed to me that, even after all I had seen and suffered, my heart was still bent on taking and Cynthia's on giving. I seemed to see my own heart through Cynthia's, while she appeared to see mine but through her own. We spoke of our experiences, and of our many friends, now hidden from us—and at last we spoke of Lucius. And then Cynthia said:

"It is strange, dearest, that now and then there should yet remain any doubt at all in my mind about your wish or desire; but I must speak; and before I speak, I will say that whatever you desire, I will do. But I think that Lucius has need of me, and I am his, in a way which I cannot describe. He is halting now in his way, and he is unhappy because his life is incomplete. May I help him?"

At this there struck through me a sharp and jealous pang; and a dark cloud seemed to float across my mind for a moment. But I set all aside, and thought for an in-

stant of the vision of God. And then I said:

"Yes, Cynthia! I had wondered too; and it seems perhaps like the last taint of earth, that I would, as it were, condemn you to a sort of widowhood of love when I am gone. But you must follow your own heart, and its pure and sweet advice, and the Will of Love; and you must use your treasure, not hoard it for me in solitude. Dearest, I trust you and worship you utterly and entirely. It is through you and your love that I have found my way to the heart of God; and if indeed you can take another heart thither, you must do it for love's own sake." And after this we were silent for a long space, heart blending wholly with heart.

Then suddenly I became aware that some one was coming up through the wood, to the rocks where we sat: and Cynthia clung close to me, and I knew that she was sorrowful to death. And then I saw Lucius come up out of the wood, and halt for a

moment at the sight of us together. Then he came on almost reverently, and I saw that he carried in his hand a sealed paper like that which had been given to Amroth; and I read it and found my summons written.

Then while Lucius stood beside me, with his eyes upon the ground, I said:

"I must go in haste; and I have but one thing to do. We have spoken, Cynthia and I, of the love you have long borne her; and she is yours now, to comfort and lead you as she has led and comforted me. This is the last sacrifice of love, to give up love itself; and this I do very willingly for the sake of Him that loves us: and here," I said, "is a strange thing, that at the very crown and summit of life, for I am sure that this is so, we should be three hearts, so full of love, and yet so sorrowing and suffering as we are. Is pain indeed the end of all?"

"No," said Cynthia, "it is not the end, and yet only by it can we measure the depth

and height of love. If we look into our hearts, we know that in spite of all we are more than rewarded, and more than conquerors."

Then I took Cynthia's hand and laid it in the hand of Lucius; and I left them there upon the peak, and turned no more. And no more woeful spirit was in the land of heaven that day than mine as I stumbled wearily down the slope, and found the valley. And then, for I did not know the way to descend, I commended myself to God; and He took me.

XXXVI

I saw that I was standing in a narrow muddy road, with deep ruts, which led up from the bank of a wide river—a tidal river, as I could see, from the great mud-flats fringed with sea-weed. The sun blazed down upon the whole scene. Just below was a sort of landing-place, where lay a number of long, low boats, shaded with mats curved like the hood of a waggon; a little farther out was a big quaint ship, with a high stern and yellow sails. Beyond the river rose great hills, thickly clothed with vegetation. In front of me, along the roadside, stood a number of mud-walled huts, thatched with some sort of reeds; beyond these, on the left, was the entrance of a larger house, surrounded with high walls, the tops of trees, with a strange red foliage, appearing over the enclosure, and the tiled

roofs of buildings. Farther still were the walls of a great town, huge earthworks crowned with plastered fortifications, and a gate, with a curious roof to it, running out at each end into horns carved of wood. At some distance, out of a grove to the right, rose a round tapering tower of mouldering brickwork. The rest of the nearer country seemed laid out in low plantations of some green-leaved shrub, with rice-fields interspersed in the more level ground.

There were only a few people in sight. Some men with arms and legs bare, and big hats made of reeds, were carrying up goods from the landing-place, and a number of children, pale and small-eyed, dirty and half-naked, were playing about by the roadside. I went a few paces up the road, and stopped beside a house, a little larger than the rest, with a rough verandah by the door. Here a middle-aged man was seated, plaiting something out of reeds, but evidently listening for sounds within the house, with an air half-tranquil, half-

anxious; by him on a slab stood something that looked like a drum, and a spray of azalea flowers. While I watched, a man of a rather superior rank, with a dark flowered jacket and a curious hat, looked out of a door which opened on the verandah and beckoned him in; a sound of low subdued wailing came out from the house, and I knew that my time was hard at hand. It was strange and terrible to me at the moment to realise that my life was to be bound up, I knew not for how long, with this remote place; but I was conscious too of a deep excitement, as of a man about to start upon a race on which much depends. There came a groan from the interior of the house, and through the half-open door I could see two or three dim figures standing round a bed in a dark and ill-furnished room. One of the figures bent down, and I could see the face of a woman, very pale, the eyes closed, and the lips open, her arms drawn up over her head as in an agony of pain. Then a sudden dimness came over

me, and a deadly faintness. I stumbled through the verandah to the open door. The darkness closed in upon me, and I knew no more.

THE END

A Selection from the Catalogue of

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

Complete Catalogue sent on application

Books by Arthur Christopher Benson

Fellow of Magdalene College, Cambridge

FAMILIAR essays are rare, and far rarer than more formal critical writings of a like quality. It is with this literary kind that Mr. Benson's work—the best of it at least—is to be classed. His books are the frank outpourings of the author's innermost thoughts, and treat, in an easy confidential manner that presupposes a single friendly listener, matters that "go home to men's business and bosoms."

When the reader puts down these delightful volumes by Mr. Benson, he may rest assured that he will do so with the feeling that he has been in good company and has passed his time with pleasure and profit. And finally he will perhaps be puzzled to determine whether he has been better pleased with the substantial thought of the book or with the urbanity and gentleman-like ease, the freshness and distinction of the diction, the fluency, and the varied cadences that combine to make this new essayist's style so charming, and charge it with the magnetism of a singularly interesting and attractive personality.

For list of volumes see the following pages.

G. P. Putnam's Sons

New York **London**

By Arthur Christopher Benson

Fellow of Magdalene College, Cambridge

15th Impression

The Upton Letters

A Companion Volume to "The Schoolmaster"

Crown 8vo. $1.25 net

"A book that we have read and reread if only for the sake of its delicious flavor. There has been nothing so good of its kind since the *Etchingham Letters*. The letters are beautiful, quiet, and wise, dealing with deep things in a dignified way."—*Christian Register.*

"A piece of real literature of the highest order, beautiful and fragrant. To review the book adequately is impossible. . . . It is in truth a precious thing."—*Weekly Survey.*

17th Impression

From a College Window

Crown 8vo. $1.25 net

"Mr. Benson has written nothing equal to this mellow and full-flavored book. From cover to cover it is packed with personality; from phase to phase it reveals a thoroughly sincere and unaffected effort of self-expression; full-orbed and four-square, it is a piece of true and simple literature."—*London Chronicle.*

5th Impression

Beside Still Waters

Crown 8vo. $1.25 net

"A delightful essayist. . . . This book is the ripest, thoughtfulest, best piece of work its author has yet produced."—*The Dial.*

"It is a graceful, charming book, lucidly and beautifully written."—*N. Y. Sun.*

The Silent Isle

Crown 8vo.

SPECIAL LIBRARY EDITION of the Upton Letters—Beside Still Waters—From a College Window. Limited to 500 sets.

3 vols., 8vo. Printed on Old Stratford linen. Handsomely bound, gilt tops, deckle edges. Sold in sets only. $7.50 net.

G. P. Putnam's Sons

New York **London**

By Arthur Christopher Benson

Fellow of Magdalene College, Cambridge

3rd Impression

The Altar Fire

Crown 8vo. $1.50 net

"Once more Mr. Benson has put forth one of his appealing and eloquent studies in human motive; and once more he has succeeded, with unfailing certainty of touch, in getting out of his study a remarkable and impressive effect."—*London Chronicle.*

2nd Impression

The Schoolmaster

A Commentary upon the Aims and Methods of an Assistant-Master in a Public School

A Companion Volume to "The Upton Letters"

Crown 8vo. $1.25 net

"The quaint philosophy of life, keen insight into human nature, and delicate appreciation of the finer sensibilities inherent in even the average "small boy's" inner consciousness combine in making the volume an agency of moral uplift as well as an educational inspiration."—*Columbus Dispatch.*

"Mr. Benson covers the whole field of scholastic life and everything that he writes is a delight to read."—*The Argonaut.*

4th Impression

At Large

Crown 8vo. $1.50 net

In the essay Mr. Benson is at his best, and here he is in his best vein. An atmosphere of rest and tranquil thoughtfulness envelops the reader, as he peruses this book so full of sage reflection, humor, shrewd observation, and serviceable thought; so fluent, accurate, and beautiful in style; so pleasingly varied in cadence.

The Gate of Death

Uniform with "From a College Window"

Crown 8vo. $1.25 net

"This beautiful and remarkable book. . . . Hardly any book since *In Memoriam* has presented such notable claims to the consideration of popular theology. The book really possesses uncommon beauty, and is not likely to be forgotten in a single season or a single year."—*London Telegraph.*

G. P. Putnam's Sons

New York **London**

By Arthur Christopher Benson

Fellow of Magdalene College, Cambridge

John Ruskin

A Study in Personality

Crown 8vo. $1.50 net. By mail, $1.65

"I have written these pages with a desire of provoking a discriminating interest in the man's life and work, with a desire to present a picture of one of the most suggestive thinkers, the most beautiful writers, and the most vivid personalities of the last generation."—*From the Preface.*

The Leaves of the Tree

Crown 8vo. $1.50 net. By mail, $1.65

Contents: Bishop Westcott, Henry Sidgwick, J. K. Stephen, Bishop Wilkinson, Professor Newton, Frederick Myers, Bishop Lightfoot, Henry Bradshaw, Matthew Arnold, Charles Kingsley, Bishop Wordsworth of Lincoln.

Mr. Benson presents biographical sketches and appreciations of certain distinguished men, each one of whom, through his life, his character, his works, and above all through personal contact, exercised a constructive influence upon the author of *The Upton Letters* and of *The Silent Isle.*

The Child of the Dawn

Crown 8vo.

A strangely interesting story in the form of an allegory, or fantasy, dealing with the hope of immortality.

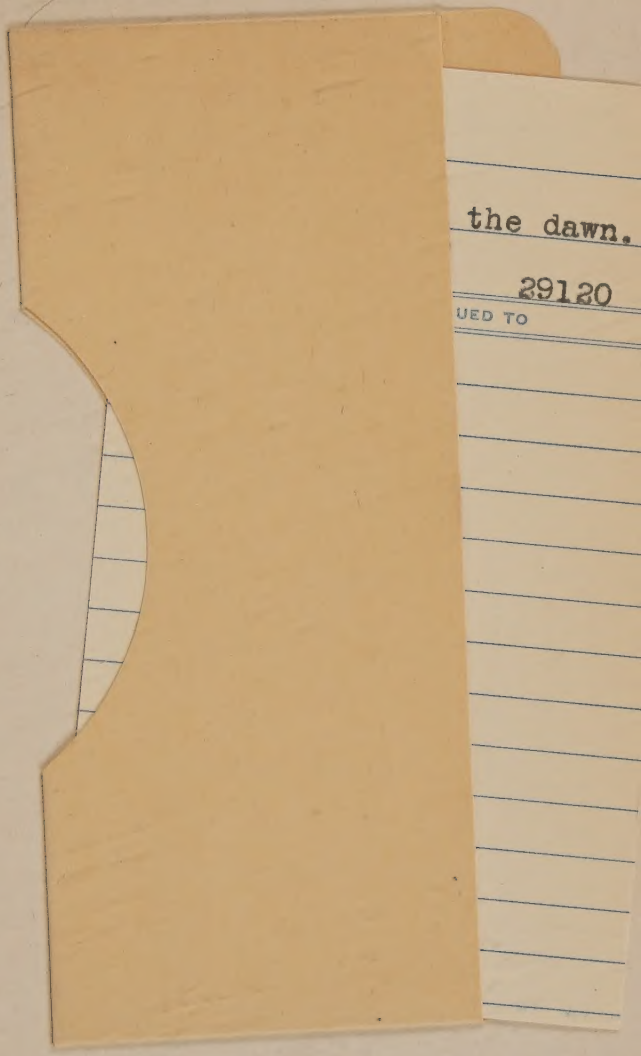
SPECIAL LIBRARY EDITION of The Upton Letters —Beside Still Waters—From a College Window. Limited to 500 sets. 3 vols., 8vo. Printed on Old Stratford linen. Handsomely bound, gilt tops, deckle edges. Sold in sets only. $7.50 net.

G. P. Putnam's Sons

New York **London**

Date Due

Library Bureau Cat. no. 1137


the dawn.
29120
UED TO